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SPARE ME YOUR

MERCY

STORY : Sammon

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SPARE ME YOUR MERCY

Sammon

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Published by Storylog Ltd. Co
www.fictionlog.co

ISBN (E-Book) : 978-616-8251-19-5

Cover illustration and design by Sammon & MIZ

A Translator's Note

A friend of mine once told me a story of how her grandfather passed away. Her grandfather was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2010. However, the family members didn't reveal this fact to him since doing so would have made his condition gone worse. She said that her grandfather wasn't aware of his illness. At night he would sit upon the hospital bed, sneakily peek at the doctor's chart to see the details of what was wrong with him, according to the nurses. He found nothing as for the chart was in English. He died two months later, unaware of black cancer in his lungs.

His agonizing period prolonged for months, and during his illness, he once suffered a serious suffocation due to excess fluid in the lungs. His eyes rolled back into his skull; his lids fluttered. His entire body was trembling. His family barely slept through that time. At last, the doctor came and told them there was a solution to this.

"I will let him sleep." That was all he said.

After listening to this, I asked myself whether this was wrong; the thing that the doctor did. When my time comes, do I even have a right to die with dignity? The concept of euthanasia is closer to us than you might think, for everyone dies eventually anyway. But how should we die and who is the one to determine our death? Ourselves or someone else?

All to these questions, you might find out the answers in 'Spare Me Your Mercy' by Sammon.

Patcharida Chaowalit

A Publisher's Note

First of all, thank you for supporting our book.

You may not know that just from purchasing our digital copy or downloading it for free, you are already becoming a supporter of book industry in Thailand. Fictionlog is not only an online publisher, but is also an online novel marketplace in Thailand. We have provided a channel for local writers to sell their books and earn money from their creativities for three years now.

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If you find out that Spare Me Your Mercy by Sammon is impressive enough, we would like you to share your thoughts on this book via any social network and discussion boards with hashtag #SpareMeYourMercy and #Fictionlog, or review this book via Amazon and Goodreads. We greatly appreciate your kindness.

Please be noted that many positive reviews will lead us to further translation and publication of Thai novels.

Enjoy the book!

Fictionlog

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Chapter One

It Begins with a Loss

Aside from her heartbeats, the old lady could hear the sound of heavy footsteps on wooden floor resounding the house. She slowly opened her bleary eyes and saw only the darkness of the night. She cried out slightly due to a pain that attacked her lower back as soon as she became conscious. It was so painful. Too painful for a little woman like her to endure.

Mrs. Raweewan, 70-years-old, was a strong woman. Everyone called her that. She was a single mother of three sons. Her eldest, although wasn't wealthy, was a sustainable merchandiser and always had time for his beloved mother. Her unfortunate middle son died in an accident. Her youngest son was a police officer, situating in another province. She had been fighting with so many things her entire life, but never once had she given up. She struggled with her failed marriage, having to financially support all three sons' education by herself. Not to mention a mountain loan of debt her husband left behind. Raweewan had hoped that she would eventually be well-off, and everything had gotten better after she became a middle-aged woman.

In the end, however, she lost her battle to a final stage endometrial cancer.

The cancer ate away her vertebral column along with her nerves, causing her unbearable agony. Without the morphine she received, she would have suffered from these agonizing pains as if she was in an everlasting hell.

The footsteps approached nearer and nearer. The old lady gradually looked around to find the source of the sound she heard. When her vision finally adjusted to the darkness, Rawewan saw a silhouette of a man standing at the end of her bed. Surprisingly, she wasn't so startled by it. The shadow approached her slowly, before sitting on the edge of her bed. Its hand reached out to lay on her fragile, skeletal one.

"Games...Games, is that you?" With a raspy voice, she called her deceased middle son. "I've...missed you..."

That hand held hers firmly. "I miss you too."

"You'll take me with you, right, James?"

"Yes" The voice of the shadow echoed near her left ear, "I want you to set your mind on your good deeds. You have donated money for hospital building construction, remember?"

The old lady nodded slowly, reminiscing the day she brought a white envelope with 10,000 Baht in it to a faraway rural hospital. The money was donated as a fund for a new construction of a hospital ward. It was the biggest merit she had ever made. Thinking about it, she felt strangely peaceful. The pain and agony began to subside.

"Mom, you're the strongest woman I've ever met. You've been through a lot of hardship in life." A deep, soothing, soft tone lulled her to relaxation for she knew this voice very well. "Now. It's time. Don't be afraid. Keep your mind calm and all this pain will go away. You'll be far away. In a peaceful place with your son."

This was all she wanted. Her eyes began to brim with tears of joy. "Thank you...Thank you..."

Just like the voice said, her pain began to fade away slowly. The old lady felt relaxed in a way she had never felt before. Her breath gradually slowed until her chest stopped moving. The pale, bleary eyes shut tight and would never open again.

Rawewan. Time of death: 02.35 a.m.



"Me?" A young physician pointed at himself. Expression of shock appeared on his face as other physicians in a conference

room applauded. He turned to look at his colleague sitting beside him. She urged him to stand up with a broad smile on her face.

“Go, Gunn”

He bashfully smiled before stood up and walked to the front of the *Medical Staff Conference Room*. He traditionally greeted the Hospital Director who was holding a certificate of honor in his hands, and then received it with humbleness.

“Dr. Guntapat’s score slightly surpasses Dr. Bunnakit’s”

There was soft laughter in the conference room. Dr. Bunnakit raised his hand to refuse with a smile. “Just give it to Gunn.”

Guntapat turned to bow his head to the Director once again and quickly walked back to his seat. Dr. Somsak, the Hospital Director, continued his speech. “As an encouragement for every doctor, I’ve prepared the ‘Outstanding Physician Awards.’ Everyone has a chance to get this award as long as you work hard, be friendly, and be a beloved one to all your colleagues. Take Gunn as a model.

Gunn shook his head with a polite smile. As a Family Physician, he was taught to be a doctor who should understand and work well with others because he had to collaborate with many diverse groups of people. It could be this advantage that made him win the award. Gunn couldn’t see that those surgeons who mostly has stressful works in the operating room, having to assess and examine a flood of patients in a rush manner would manage to get the votes the way he did.

“Looks like Kittipong wasn’t so impressed with this.” Dr. Ning, an obstetrician who was Gunn’s close friend, moved closer to whisper in his ear. The person she talked about was an orthopedic surgeon who had a reputation for his coldness.

“Nah, his face is always like that” Gunn put the certificate of honor he had just received in a folder in his satchel.

“Aside from this delightful subject, I’ve to announce that...” Director Somsak paused for a short while, “it’s such a shame that one of our physicians, Dr. Bunnakit from the Forensic Department, will resign and begin his new position as a professor in Bangkok. I’d like to invite all physicians to attend Dr. Bunnakit’s farewell party this Friday. The one who could attend, please respond in our LINE group

chat so that my secretary could reserve tables at the restaurant for you. Our new forensic physician, who is going to work in Dr. Bunnakit's position, is Dr. Supapon. We expect her to meet you all on the day she begins her work here."

Gunn turned to look at a younger physician who sat opposite him at the table. Bunnakit was a forensic physician who had recently gone through a traumatic experience. Gunn wasn't so surprised that he would resign to escape all the bad things that had happened to him. Several months ago, this young forensic physician involved in a mystery murder case that had him ended up being assaulted, kidnapped, and threatened for his life. All these ordeals that had happened to him must be too much for Bunnakit to handle. Gunn remembered the first day Bunnakit came back to work after the ordeals. He didn't seem like himself. All Gunn could do was to give him a moral support and feel sorry for him. He was an excellent forensic physician, gifted with brilliant teaching techniques, and loved by nurses and interns. A professor would be a role that suited him well in the next couple of months.

After the meeting, all physicians went their separate ways to do their jobs. Gunn and Ning walked out together and went straight to an elevator in front of the conference room. Gunn was busy finding the Physicians' LINE group chat to sign up for Dr. Bunnakit's farewell party.

"Do you want to go? I can sign up for both of us." Gunn turned his head to ask his friend.

"Yeah, count me in." Ning leaned in to look at the screen of Gunn's smartphone. "Gotcha, you're talking with girls again."

"What girls? I'm looking for the LINE group chat," Gunn hurriedly put away his phone. "What's your plan for this afternoon?"

"I've two C-Section cases waiting for me in the operating room. What about you, Gunn?"

"To the health station, and then I'll go to a funeral at the temple in the city."

Ning raised her eyebrows, "Whose funeral?"

"A home care patient. I've visited there often because there're so many issues to analyze. She's a 70-year-old lady with a final stage

CA Corpus^[1]. It spread to her vertebral column, crushing her nerves, so the lady had a serious problem with ache. Several adjustments of her medication didn't help much. We planned to send her to a university hospital for pain control, but she couldn't come to the hospital any longer." Gunn sighed quietly. "At least the pain is gone now."

"You did your best, Gunn." Ning lightly patted Gunn's shoulder. "No one understands terminal stage patients like you do, Gunn."

"Well, there is just me. The only consultant in this hospital."

Gunn looked up at his reflection in the mirror of the elevator. He was a 31-year-old man with charming face. He had a distinctive feature of a native Thai with yellowish-pale complexion. Today, he wore a short-sleeve lab coat, which was an intern uniform, over a long, black shirt. Gunn still liked wearing this uniform, although he had already become a medical specialist. On his chest, green alphabets were embroiled, reading, "Guntapat Akaramaytee, MD' He was a family medicine specialist, obtained a diploma in occupational medicine, and was the only one in this hospital who had a knowledge on palliative care^[2].

The elevator opened on the ground floor. The first thing you could see was the sea of patients who were waiting for physical examination in the afternoon. Ning turned around to wave him a goodbye before quickly walking straight to the direction of the nearby building where the operating rooms were located. Gunn went to a four-door pickup truck belonged to the hospital that parked at the front. He needed to go back to examine the remaining patients from this morning at the Regional Public Health Promoting Hospital, and then went to pay respect to his former home care patient.



Temperature in the temple was incredibly hot due to blazing sunlight in the late afternoon. Gunn took off his lab coat, placing it on his shoulder. He stepped out of the hospital's truck and strode to the temple pavilion where the body of Mrs. Rawewan was laid. At the moment, the guests took turn to pay the dead respects and talked

with the dead's relatives continuously. Gunn tried to look around to find someone he knew. The first two persons that he saw were the eldest son of Mrs. Rawewan and his wife. These two were the main caregivers of his former patient. The eldest son was Mr. Thongkum, a 45-year-old man, who was currently a merchandiser. His wife was a seamstress. This family was considered wealthy compared with surrounding households.

If you asked Gunn how he knew all this, the answer would be: this was a special talent of the family physician.

"Hello, Mr. Thongkum." Gunn put his palms together, greeting the middle-aged man who was busy rearranging chairs in the tent.

"Doctor!" Thongkum shouted with a broad smile. He accepted the greeting from the doctor, putting his palms together and bow his heads several times. "I didn't know you would come."

"I'm so sorry for your loss. I wish everyone in this family to stay strong." Gunn pulled out an envelope with some amount of money in it.^[3] "Please, accept this."

Thongkum received the envelope and put his palms together to show a sign of gratitude. "Thank you so much, Doctor. I'll take you to pay my mother respects."

Gunn stood still for a while, looking at the face of the young Rawewan in a gold frame before picking up an incense stick. He prayed silently and then buried the incense stick into the pot.

At that moment, Gunn could sense someone was staring at him. He raised his head and looked through the joss stick pot to where the coffin laid. His eyes met the eyes of a man who was staring at him intensely. He had to be in his early thirty. The man had an average body, but very muscular it could be seen from a white tight T-shirt he wore. He had tanned-skin as if he had been bathed in the sun. His thick, dark eyebrows made his face looking fierce. His close-cropped hair gave away his occupation. Gunn had never seen this guy before, but he didn't know if the guy would think of him as a stranger the way he thought.

Mr. Thongkum walked straight to that man and led him to the direction where Gunn stood. That was when Gunn noticed the

similarities between the two. And that was when it occurred to him that he had seen this man's face in the picture on the wall.

Is this the police officer who was working in another province? He was Reweewan's youngest son who Gunn had never had a chance to meet. Thinking of this, Gunn was dumbfounded. He stared at the man who was walking here as if he was enchanted. The man's eyes were alluring. That kind of gaze belonged to a stubborn, unyielding person. When he approached and came to stand next to Gunn, it could be seen that Gunn was a bit taller than him.

"Doctor, this is Captain Wasan, my younger brother. He's going to be an Inspector soon. He's just moved here to be an investigator," Thongkum gestured his hand toward the Doctor and said in Thai Northern dialect. "And this is Doctor Guntapat, the one I told ye that he'd helped look after ma at home"

Wasan nodded his head slightly, but he didn't raise his hands to greet Gunn. Gunn didn't hold it against him anyway. If he hadn't mistaken, from the information he heard, the youngest son of this family was older than him.

"Thank you for looking after my mom" Wasan's voice was stern, curt, and husky.

"Doctor, please, take a seat. I'll bring you a glass of water." Thongkum led Gunn to a sofa on the temple pavilion. Gunn didn't want to refuse his kindness, so he walked to the seat prepared by Thongkum. He began to breathe freely again after he separated from Wasan. However, the awkwardness came back when the man followed him here and sat next to Gunn.

"I was about to move here. Mom told me that she'll wait for me." Wasan gazed at the direction of the coffin. "All I cared about was my career advancement, so I took the position in a big province. When mom was diagnosed with final stage cancer, I hurriedly planned to move back here, in my hometown, to take care of her. But I was one day too late."

"I often heard your mom saying she wanted to wait and see you." Gunn spoke with a soft tone before digging up the lesson from Reassurance and Sympathy course he had attended in medical class and put it to a good use. "You must've felt sorry that you missed the

opportunity to come back and look after her, but don't be. Every time Mrs. Rawewan talked about you, her face filled with pride."

Naturally, talking this way would make others feel more or less better. However, Gunn couldn't tell at all how the man in front of him felt. "You seem to know a lot about our family."

Gunn fell silent for a few seconds before he smiled. "I know everything about my patient's health. Health consists of physical, mental, and social health. I even know the soul of my patients, and what their lives want in the end."

Wasan moved his gaze back to Gunn's face. "Then, my mom doesn't want to wait for me to return home. That's why she passed away so quickly before I came back."

Gunn could sense anger in his voice. "I understand that you're feeling sad and upset. Let me tell you your mother's wish that she once told me." He reached to touch Wasan's thigh lightly. "She doesn't want to wake up and suffer from this agonizing pain any longer"

Wasan closed his eyes. "If that's what my mom wanted, I guess I've to accept it."

At last, Gunn could make the person in front of him felt more relaxed. A young woman approached them and offered them two small bottles of cold water. Gunn said thank you, opened the lid, and drank it. It was time to say goodbye to this family. "I've to go. If any of you have any health problems, you can always contact me at the hospital."

Wasan glanced down at the hand which was still on his thigh, making Gunn swiftly pulled his hand back from the area that would make Wasan felt uncomfortable.

"Where are you from?" Suddenly, Wasan asked Gunn.

"I'm from Nonthaburi^[4]. Just been here for three years."

"I see." That was all Wasan's response, and then he was quiet for a long period of time. That was supposed to be a signal to end this conversation.

Gunn decided to bid Wasan farewell. After he said goodbye to Mr. Thongkum, Gunn walked back to the hospital's truck. Thus, it is considered that today's mission was complete.

Chapter two

The Family Physician

“There are so many cancer patients these days, don’t you think, Aye^[5] Tae?” Anne, a young home care nurse, turned to complain with Tae, a public health technical officer, who was busy arranging the files of the patients in this sub-district.

Regional Public Health Promoting Hospital (RPHPH) or locally known as health station, was a small healthcare unit that expanded into a community-wide level. It was an essential foundation for fundamental healthcare of the people in the community to reduce the number of patients piling in the large hospital and the proactive health work to control preventable illness. All these were exhausting jobs, especially home visiting duty that Anne was a primary responsible person.

“Yes, quite so. Last year, especially in our sub-district, there were 13 cancer cases in total. Early this year, 8 cases were found.” Tae turned on a computer to input the data obtained from the patients in his responsible area.

“Not only there are many cases, but ever since Doctor Gunn came here, the deaths of palliative cases have been rapidly increasing” Anne scooted her chair beside Tae. “I think it’s his jinxed fortune. Believe me. This couple of years, patients died much faster. If you asked me, some of them could have lived for several months. But then two or three days after the diagnosis, they ended up dead.”

“Good for them, then. Better than let them suffer.” The middle-aged officer turned to look at Anne. “Especially in Mrs. Rawewan’s case, she went through so much pain. Whenever we visited her, we

would hear her making that pitiful groan. At least she doesn't have to suffer anymore."

"Hey, Aye Tae, I went to pay respect to Mrs. Raweewan this morning, and met with her youngest son who is a cop. I've heard he moved here and was going to be an inspector."

"Is it true?!" Tae turned his head around, his eye got wide. "Wasan? I've known him even before he attended the Royal Police Cadet Academy. Is he an inspector now?"

"Yeah, he's such a handsome guy. A cop like him would be a good match for a nurse." Anne raised both of her hands to cup her cheeks, acting like she was blushing. "Since you know him, Aye Tae, please ask for his number for me."

"What about your husband?"

"Ugh, my husband is staying at home. He wouldn't know."

The topic about the number of deaths of the terminal stage patients unnaturally escalated was abandoned after Wasan's name was brought up. Wasan or 'Pol. Capt. Wasan Kumboonrueng' at the age of 33, had just moved from a big province, repositioning from a Deputy Inspector to be an Inspector at this Police Station. Wasan grew up in this local area, so all people in the sub-district knew him well. He was the pride of Mrs. Raweewan and his older brother. His return was the talk of the town. He was the hope and a legal defender of everyone in the sub-district.

The soon-to-be Inspector in a police uniform adorned with three stars on his shoulders sat at his desk in the police station, looking around the room to collect the details in an unfamiliar office. Since his mother passed away, his reason to move here became futile. However, he had made his decision, and had to move on. At least now, he came back to the place he grew up. Aside from having to adjust to his new working environment, he guessed everything wasn't that bad.

Doctor Guntapat...

He didn't know if it was some sort of sceptical feeling or something else that made this name popped into his mind all the time. Wasan wrote down the physician's name on the paper before decided to pick up his phone and look up the name on Facebook.

There were several names appeared on the screen but the only profile picture that matched the man in his memory was the one belonged to Guntapat Akaramaytee.

Wasan looked at Doctor Guntapat's pictures before turning off his screen and put his phone in his pocket without sending a friend request. He had an appointment with the Deputy Director in a few minutes. He had to focus on his work and let Doctor Guntapat be just another interesting story that comes and goes.



“I didn’t bring a wreath with me yesterday. So, today, I want to give it to you as a representative of home visit office of the hospital.”

This was Doctor Guntapat's reason for their second encounter at the temple. Although Wasan was confused as to why the Doctor had to carry the wreath in person, he accepted it with thanks. Then he turned to the direction of the nurse who was holding a camera waiting to take some shots. Wasan saw Guntapat send him a faint smile as if to send him some sort of message which he didn't quite understand.

And again, Guntapat showed up for the third time on the cremation day. Wasan never knew before that the home visit doctors had to attend the funeral of their former patients this often. Although he was grateful that Doctor Guntapat devoted his attention to his mother's funeral, in the end, he couldn't overcome his curiosity. So, after the cremation ceremony, he walked up to the Doctor to have a private conversation with him.

“Doctor” Wasan's harsh, curt voice brought Gunn to a halt. He then turned back and smiled faintly while Wasan knitted his eyebrows.

“Hello, Inspector.”

“You can call me, ‘Captain’ for now. I'm still waiting for an official appointment order” Wasan took a deep breath. “Please, come with me.”

Two men in black clothes walked to the area behind the pavilion, in front of a crematory.

“Thank you for coming to my mom’s cremation ceremony.” Wasan said. Gunn still flashed a gentle smile at him and reached his hand to touch Wasan’s arm lightly.

“Mrs. Raweewan became an angel in heaven now. There is nothing left to worry about.”

Wasan eye’s drifted to the hand that intentionally touched his body for a second time and decided to ask. “Please tell me I didn’t imagine things, Doctor Guntapat?”

There was a moment of silence. Wasan knew that this question was confusing, still, Doctor Guntapat perfectly understood its meaning. His dark brown irises stared back at Wasan’s eyes as if he could read his mind. “You didn’t imagine it”

Wasan crossed his arm to avoid the Doctor’s hand, looking in another direction. “I still can't get over my mom’s death. Let's talk about it after I can cope with it”

“I don't want to rush into anything here. It’s true that I want to impress you, but I really do want to offer my condolence. I really hope the patient I’ve been caring for would find peace in heaven.” Gunn pulled out his phone, opened the dial pad screen, and handed it to the man in front of him. “Can I have your number, Captain?”

Wasan stared at the phone for a long while, as if he needed time to make a decision. Finally, Wasan reached out to take that phone and pressed his number before returning it to its owner. Gunn took the phone with a polite smile and called out to exchange his number. Wasan’s phone vibrated in his pocket one time.

“If you need any help after this...call me.” Gunn bowed slightly to excuse himself. “I’ve to visit another patient in the afternoon. If we’ve a chance, let’s have dinner together sometime.”

Wasan watched the tall, slender man walked away. Inside, he was asking himself whether it was a good idea to give his number right away. Not so many people could easily get to him and open him up that way. It might be Gunn’s kindness to his mother, the way he approached him, his witty remark that was full of sympathy, his looks, and everything else combined, that made Wasan forget about his sorrow for a second.

This wasn't the right time to think about these kinds of things. Wasan intended to keep a distance from Gunn for a while, waiting for the sadness to fade away, and then he would begin with a new chance as another man had left the door wide open for him.



“Sorry, I’m late. Sorry Tui, Mo.” Doctor Gunn ran into the area where a hospital’s white van was parking. He hopped onto the van that a nurse and a physiotherapist were waiting inside for him.

“Where have you been, my handsome Doc?” Mo, the physiotherapist, asked.

“I went to a funeral. It wasn’t finished until almost afternoon, so I was late for five minutes.” Gunn raised his sleeve to wipe out some sweat from his forehead. The mercilessly high temperature of April was almost unbearable even in the northern part which was supposed to be the coolest region. “We’re scheduled to visit two patients, right?”

“Yep, they are both new cases, but one of them is in terminal stage of Cholangiocarcinoma. Would you like to visit this case first?” Tui handed home patients’ files to Gunn. He received the files with a big smile.

“Great. Let’s go.”

The first home patient the team visited was Mr. Songkran Jomjai, aged 55. His house was located in an overcrowded community area where the household were huddling together. The road leading to the community and allies were so complex. It was only big enough for one car to pass through at a time. Gunn stepped down from the hospital van. He looked up at a two-story wooden house with a low open space under it^[6]. The house was surrounded by Longan trees and a low, decayed wooden fence. Gunn memorized every detail he saw because he had to know everything that was related to his patient’s health as much as he could.

The first thing that caught his eyes was the stairs in front of the house which could be used as direct access to the house’s second

story.

For elderly patients who could still walk and take care of themselves, this was one of the most worrisome environmental factors. Elderly patients and stairs were forever enemies. He had encountered the elder cases who fell off the stairs and broke their bones. Some even hit their heads on the ground and ended up with intracerebral hemorrhage. Or in the worst-case scenario, many of them died on the spot. This patient, however, was bedridden. Let's just get rid of the stairs problem for now.

A young skinny woman walked right up to the medical team. She greeted them with modesty. "Hello, *jao*!"

"Hi there, I'm a home visit doctor from the hospital. Are you..." Gunn took a glance at a name on the file. "Mr. Songkran's relative?"

"I'm his wife, *jao*." The middle-aged woman told them "Please follow me inside, Doc."

"How many of you live here?"

"There are two of us, *jao*. Relatives come from time to time, but the one who always been here with him is me. Our son went to work in Bangkok. The lad always sends me money to take care of his pa'.

Gunn nodded. "It's great to have your son supporting you financially. What's your name, Miss?"

"My name's Ying, *jao*." The middle-aged woman smiled sweetly. She could sense right away that the doctor in front of her had such a warm tone and was more attentive than other doctors she had met.

Songkran was lying on a mattress above the wooden floor in the first room, next to the front door. The patient was so thin that his skeletons could be seen. His eyes appeared yellowish as well as his skin, indicating a serious condition of jaundice from a bile duct obstruction. Gunn knelt beside his patient. "Hi, Mr. Songkran. I'm Doctor Guntapat. I'm a home visit doctor."

Songkran raised his shaky hands to greet. His eyes brightened up at the sight of the man in the short lab coat. "Hello, Doc."

"Do you always sleep here?"

"Yes, I can't move around these days."

Tui, a registered nurse, who had been visiting the patients for more than 10 years, looked at Doctor Guntapat with admiration. If you

asked her what a perfect Family Physician look like, she would chose Doctor Guntapat as a role model. Not only was he equipped with an approachable appearance, but he was also a doctor who had a good human relation, prudent, and could see through all aspects of his patients' problems, not just the illness. He had never missed any other problematic factors that affect his patients' health. Doctor Guntapat once told her that if you looked at the patients by judging solely on illness, you would see just their illness. If you saw them as a human, you would see everything, and if you could see that part of them, we might be able to cure them from their illness without having to rely on medicines.

After Tui measured the patient's pulse signal, she stepped back, allowing Gunn to thoroughly examine him. Physical anomaly that Gunn had found, aside from malnutrition, was a condition of ascites and a large lump that could be felt through abdomen.

"You must've felt uncomfortable, Mr. Songkran."

Songkran vigorously nodded. This doctor understood him so well. "Yes, Doc. It's so tight and painful. I feel a pain in my stomach, my back. All of them."

"You've endured with the pain this long, you're so strong." Gunn hook a stethoscope around his neck. "Do you want me to help you with any other symptoms?"

"Mostly there are a bloating and the ache, Doc." Songkran raised his hand to touch Gunn's arm lightly and whispered so low that it barely audible to others. "It's so painful that sometimes I don't want to live anymore. It's very tormented."

Gunn was silent for a few seconds. He looked at Songkran's face with an unreadable expression before lowering his head to speak softly. "If I can help you from this misery, do you want it?"

Songkran nodded slowly. "Yes, I do."

Gunn smiled faintly and spoke with a loud voice for everyone to hear. "Then, I'll take care of your pain. I'll give you a new set of painkillers and have Miss Mo, the physiotherapist here, teach you the therapeutic exercise. Maybe when your pain is gone, you might have the reason to stay with your lovely wife longer."

What Gunn had just said brought a wide smile to the face of Songkran's wife.

After discussed about a terminal care with the patient and his family members, Gunn and the visiting team marched back to the van parking in the lawn. Gunn kept the documents that he thoroughly recorded in the file and handed it to Tui. "I've recalculated morphine dose for the patient. Tell his wife to pick up the medicine with me at the Outpatient Department tomorrow morning. I want the next visit in two weeks. Please make the appointment for me."

"Of course, Doctor Gunn, I'll postpone other non-emergency cases."

"Please contact RPHPH to send the officer to assess the patient after we've readjusted his morphine dose. Tell them to call me if they have any trouble." Gunn slid close the door of the van. "Let's go to the next case."



In the midst of lightning bolt and the sound of the howling wind in a summer thunderstorm, Songkran heard the door opened, followed by the quiet footsteps. He wanted to know who opened the door in the middle of the night. However, drowsiness from the painkiller made his eyes feel so heavy. He couldn't even find a strength to open his eyes, let alone calling out to his wife who should be lying close by, no matter how badly he wanted to.

The footsteps were approaching closer and closer until he heard that person's breathing. Songkran's heartbeat sped up. He wanted to open his eyes, but he felt like he was in a sleep paralysis. He couldn't command his body at will.

Ying? Ying, sweetheart, where are you?

He felt like someone was holding his hand and slowly crept up to his arm before patting his head as if to console him. The thunder boomed for a second time, followed by the rain that began to fall. Songkran heard a whisper near his ear.

"After this, you won't have to endure this pain anymore, Songkran."

I knew this voice.

Hold on. Am I dying?

Although it was painful, so painful that he wanted to leave this world, he still wanted to live with his wife. He still wanted to see her smile again. He wanted to be with her as long as this body could withstand. New set of painkillers that the home visit doctor gave him had already eased his pain immensely. He thought that he might have lived...

The sound of raindrops against rooftop was the last thing he heard before it was gone, along with the pain he had endured for six months.

Chapter Three

Euthanasia

Wasan walked towards the building as two nurses in blue uniforms and slim black pants got off a motorcycle. Wasan used to call this place a near-home health station before it was renamed to the Regional Public Health Promoting Hospital.

“Look who’s here” Tae walked out of his office, heading towards the man in a full-dressed police uniform. The eyes of the middle-aged man were full of pride. “How may I help you, Captain?”

“Just like when I was a kid.” Wasan sniffed his stuffed nose. “May I have mucus reducer and nasal congestion meds, please?”

“Every time after rain or whenever weather changes, laddie Wasan’s allergies would always act up.” Tae giggled while reminiscing the old days, when Wasan was just a ragged-looking lad who spoke bluntly. The lad would come to ask him the favor almost every time the weather changes.

“Do you feel better? It’s been a week.” He was talking about Wasan’s mother.

“Still missing her, but I feel much better now.”

“Great! We living souls need to move on.” Tae patted Wasan on his shoulders. “Wait here, son. I’ll fetch the medicine for you.”

“Thank you.” He sat on a bench in front of the examination rooms with no doctors around. There was also no patients in sight, so luckily, he didn’t have to wait long for the medicine. He had just received an assault incident report. Having a runny nose wouldn’t do him any good while talking with people in the crime scene.

“Unbelievable! Dr. Guntapat just visited Songkran last week, and he was dead already.” A nurse was talking to Tae who was busy locating medicine in the cabinet. Wasan lifted his head instantly when he heard the name ‘Guntapat’ from the conversation.

“That’s cool, right? So he doesn’t have to suffer any longer.”

“I was there to assess his pain after we’ve adjusted his medicine as Tui instructed. I was too late, though. Ying told me that he probably passed away peacefully last night while asleep.

“Have you called Dr. Gunn? He might want to give that time slot to another case.”

“I told Anne to call.”

“Please also tell Dr. Gunn that he forgot his steth here, in an examination room. Just in case he went to look for it at the hospital.”

Wasan eavesdropped the conversation until Tae returned with two bags of medicine. Wasan hurriedly stood up from the seat and took the bags. “Antihistamines^[8] will make you feel a bit sleepy, but we only have this type. It’ll ease your symptoms”

“Thank you” Wasan put his hands together to show his gratitude and was about to turn back. However, his doubts made him turn back to ask Tae. “What day is Dr. Gunn on duty here?”

“He’s here every Tuesday. Normally he stations at the provincial hospital. Actually, he came this morning and just left around 1 p.m. because of an urgent meeting at the hospital. He hurried off that he left the steth.” Tae laughed. “If you want a checkup with him, you can come on Tuesday.”

Wasan was silent for a moment. “Would you like me to bring the steth to Doc? “

Tae raised his eyebrows with amazement. “You already knew Doc, right? Will you meet him again soon?”

Wasan nodded. “We already knew each other.” But he didn’t answer the latter question.

Tae shrugged. “If you wouldn’t mind, please give it to him.” Tae walked to the examination room and came back with the crimson stethoscope before handing it to Wasan. “Are you sure you want to bring it to him? Dr. Gunn could pick it up himself, no biggie.”

“I’ll return it to him myself” Wasan bade the man farewell and hurriedly walked out of the building.



Why the hell did I have to bring it with me?

Wasan kept asking himself that question since the moment he left RPHPH. He couldn’t tell at all what he was thinking back then. His head was full with confusions. He felt like he knew the answer, but a curtain of fog obscured it. Wasan glanced at the medical equipment which was lying on his desk. It seemed out of place, lying with his case files and his police hat like this. After he investigated the crime scene, Wasan hurried back to take care of his unfinished case files until the official working hours had passed. He didn’t drop by the hospital like he first intended to.

Wasan snapped out of his reverie when his phone on a desk vibrated. He stared at the caller’s name and knitted his brows tightly before he answered the call. “Hello.”

“Hello, Captain.” The voice at the end of the line seemed pleasant. “I heard you took my stuff.”

Wasan was dumbstruck for a long while before sighing loudly. “I just offered to help returning it to you because I’ve to ride pass your workplace anyway.”

“Thank you so much. Actually, you shouldn’t have to trouble yourself, unless you want to...” Guntapat paused to leave everything else to imagination.

“I don’t want anything. Come and take back your steth right now. I’m working at the PS^[9].” Wasan spoke in a loud, curt tone. “If you don’t have anything else to say, please hang up. I’ve got piles of work to do.”

“Wait, please, wait.” Gunn stopped him. “I can’t go right now. Can we meet somewhere else? A restaurant, perhaps?”

“You really do have to ask me to dinner, huh?”

“Not just to have a dinner. You also have to return my stuff.”

“I shouldn’t have kept it for you.”

“Thank you in advance, Captain. I’ll send my free time slot for your decision, then?”

When did he agree to this? Why did he have to make things difficult? Wasan thought. “You could just come here to my office or just wait for me to return it to you at the hospital tomorrow.”

“Do not forget to choose the day. I’ll wait.”

“Are you even listening to me!?”

“Your voice sounds more nasal than usual, by the way. Get some rest and drink a lot of water.”

Wasan raised his hand to his temple and shook his head. He hung up the telephone dismissively without saying goodbye. It was his mistake for taking Guntapat’s belonging like that. He could feel that many complicated things would surely follow. This person was going to interrupt his peaceful, quiet life.

The last time someone had romantically approached him was when he was a Deputy Inspector. That guy was a District Chief; his appearance was average. Due to his concern with mom’s health and the fact that he was about to move back to his hometown, Wasan was the one who ended their relationship. Of course, the relationship between Wasan and the District Chief was unknown to others. His sexual orientation had been kept in secret since he knew what he wanted, even before he became a cadet. On the outside, he was a straight man. It was very difficult for other people to be able to tell that he likes men.

It just takes one to know one. He guessed Dr. Guntapat must be *the one* like him.



After the conversation ended, Gunn smiled broadly. He sent his availability on the evenings to Wasan before placing his phone on a table in his bedroom. He dragged his exhausted body from a long period of attending the meeting to the shower. He took off his long-sleeve shirt, revealing a strong body from his regular workouts. Gunn looked at himself in the mirror. He didn’t think he looked bad. He could, more or less, impress another man and he was

quite sure that Wasan was interested in him. That's why he did something strange like keeping his steth as a hostage, so that they could have an opportunity to meet again.

After the shower, Gunn walked back to his desk, tuned on his MacBook, and read an English article that he had left open in the browser. Tomorrow, there will be a Family Physician Conference. He intended to give a lecture to the attendees on one topic, which was the topic that he had been interested in and had been studying for a long time. He wanted others to see his point of view. Perhaps what he would say tomorrow might actually happen in the future.



“Euthanasia”

The first word that appeared on Guntapat's presentation drew attention from everyone in the conference room. In the room, there were medical interns, Inservice Training^[10] Physicians from Family Medicine and three of Guntapat's colleagues who were medical specialists.

“Does anyone know this word?” Guntapat asked the attendees. Then, a female in-service training physician raised her hand.

“It's a **mercy killing**, a practice that helps patients end their lives at their own will.”

“Thank you. It may still illegal in Thailand. However, these days, the practice is legal in some countries, such as Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, and in some states of the United States.” Guntapat pressed a button to change the slide, “The right to live or die belong to whom exactly? Many people would say, it depends on the context of each case. In the case that the patients were fully conscious, they could choose for themselves. However, in the case of vegetative stage patients, the decision mainly belongs to the patients' family members. In Thailand, the most we can do is to comply with the National Health Act entitled the Right to Die, stating that, ‘a person shall have the right to express one's desire regarding their treatment methods or to refuse the treatment service, which is provided merely

to prolong his or her terminal stage of life, to die peacefully and retain human dignity.' Mercy killing is not explicitly mentioned in the text, as well as providing a patient with an equipment for ending his or her life."

A foreign movie poster appeared on the screen. The protagonist of the story was diagnosed with bone cancer in a spreading stage and he decided to end his life in the country that allow the practice of euthanasia.

"The word 'Euthanasia' is literally consisted of two words: 'good' and 'death', putting them together means 'good death' or 'peaceful death' which has a different meaning from the word 'assisted suicide' or assisting someone to die. Therefore, your answer might not precisely fit with the definition of the word 'Euthanasia'. I believe that everybody would want a good death. I, too, want a peaceful death with no suffering, regardless of the methods. As an expert, if you could offer this choice to the patients and they accept it willingly, would you like to do it?"

"I still think it's a murder." Dr. Anucha vouched his opinion. "We all have studied to treat our patients. Even though the ones in terminal stage are incurable, we still have the concept of palliative care, a duty to take care of the patients and make them naturally pass away as painless as possible."

"Well, the principle of the palliative care is to focus on the quality of life, isn't it, Dr. Anucha?" Gunn turned to argue with a senior family physician. Anucha nodded. "So, it suggests the doctors not to treat a disease that will make their patients suffered, to inform their patients' family members and convince them to sign a refusal of treatment form and take the patients home instead. Could 'a refusal of treatment' such as CPR, ventilator, or not prescribing medicine that we're practicing be deemed indirectly killing our patients? These practices even take longer time before the patients passed away. They all face the same ending, but it's more suffering than what the doctors could do for them."

The conference room suddenly fell into silence.

"I only raised the point to make you think. If euthanasia is practicable, it might be a good alternative. However, there're still

many concerns that needed to be further discussed. The major one is religious belief. Ending one own life is considered a sin in almost every religion. If in the future we could apply it, the practice of euthanasia may be expanded not only to patients in a terminal stage, but also other patients, or even the healthy ones who feel like they have seen enough and want to end it. The terrifying aspect is whether it will be used as a tool to save the budget of healthcare system. What follows is that euthanasia will be used irresponsibly even with a treatable patient. We need to create an effective system to deal with this.”

Guntapat ended his video presentation after roughly one hour, and was very satisfied with it. He chose to speak on this topic because he merely wanted everyone to learn the word ‘Euthanasia.’ He neither supported nor opposed it. Having to work closely with dying patients, he took an interest in extensive knowledge about terminally ill patients. He also had followed many articles about euthanasia for several years, just hoping to share this information to others.

After the presentation went smoothly, he hoped to have a pleasant first ‘date’ with Captain Wasan this evening as well.



The place Wasan chose was a small Isan Hot Pot restaurant in downtown. Gunn had dreamed of bringing Wasan to a fancy restaurant in a mall, but when he picked this one, Gunn gladly accepted. The two sat at a table in an outdoor patio. It was so close to the street that they could clearly hear the traffic. Wasan dressed casually in a T-shirt and sweatpants. Gunn was still in his uniform, but he took off his lab coat.

“Are we eating hot soup in this hot weather?” Gunn asked while looking at the vapor that kept coming out of the boiling pot.

“You should try it first. You’ll know that we should come here regardless of the weather” Wasan scooped up some cooked pork and vegetable into a bowl. “I apologize if the food is not your cup of tea.”

Gunn smiled. *I knew it.* Wasan was teasing him. “When I visit a patient, I ate sticky rice with Larb^[11] they gave me with my hands. I’ve even eaten on the lawn. This is fancy enough for me.”

Wasan lifted his gaze with a poker face before digging into his meals. “I want to ask you something.”

“What is it?”

“What type of doctor are you?”

“What type of doctor am I?” Gunn scooped up another ladle of soup for the man before him. “I’m a family physician, a specialist who is trained to provide primary care for patients. My work includes both providing treatment and preventive health care. I’m supposed to be the first doctor the patients meet before sending them to other specialists. We’ve special skills in communicating and understanding the patients, teaching them to take care of themselves, and visit them occasionally. Some of us enrolled in additional programs like Occupational Health, Geriatric Medicine^[12] or Palliative Care.”

“Sounds like a general practice unlike other specialists.”

“Indeed. Fortunately, I’m working at the provincial hospital, so we can share our workload. I’m responsible for terminal patients’ cases.”

“You like working with dying people?”

Gunn began to notice Wasan’s interrogation skill. He asked questions in a short, curt manner that could draw so many answers out from the questioned. “I know that I shouldn’t be liking death, but what I like is providing a good death to my patients.”

Wasan drew his eyebrows together. “Your words are very dangerous.”

“Take it easy. I’m not the one responsible for the patients’ deaths. They’ll eventually die from the illness. I just help them prepare for it. A peaceful death consists of many compositions, such as being devoid of pain, being with the people they love, being able to connect with their religion or belief, and suitable ending places. Not only that, I also have to handle the grief of family members after the loss.”

“It’s the reason why you came to my mom’s funeral so often, then? You’re worried that my brother and I’ll have too much grief?”

“You know very well that isn’t the only reason.” Gunn said while the corners of his lips tugging up.

Wasan hated what he heard. It was like everything was thrown at him so that he would be the one responsible for his action, and he couldn't deny it. He himself was the one who openly asked if he hadn't imagined Gunn's intention to romantically approach him.

After they were full, Wasan took out his leather bag and searched for the stethoscope—the reason that he was here, dining with Gunn—then handed it over to the owner. “Take it and our business is ended”

Gunn reached out, but instead of grabbing only the stethoscope, his big hand also brushed against Wasan's “Do you have any plan tonight? Shall we have a drink at the hotel?”

His sharp gaze mesmerized Wasan. The only thing he could focus was those eyes full of fiery passion. Wasan didn't want to play with the fire, but sometimes the dangerous flame was so seductive and hard to resist. Wasan weighed the pros and cons. He didn't want to be seen as an easy person. However, when the opportunity was knocking on his door, it was hard to refuse.

“I've to wake up early. my brother and I planned to give alms to the monks on behalf of our late mom before going to work.” Finally, Wasan gave his answer. “Maybe next time, Dr. Guntapat.”

The doctor raised his eyebrows like he was disappointed before taking his stethoscope into his satchel. “Of course, next time then...”

“Because I...” Wasan suddenly blurted out. “want to know more about you. I want a serious relationship with you, so I don't want to sleep with you just yet. I don't want to be your one-night stand. You understand me?”

Gunn was stunned with such honest words. It was true that he wanted to sleep with Wasan, but he also wanted it to be a long-term relationship. Looked like he had to please the man in front of him for now. Getting to know about each other, one step at a time, was quite reasonable. “I also don't want just your body, Captain.”

Wasan placed money on a tray. “This meal is on me. Next time, your turn.”

His resolution made Gunn's heart hammer in his chest. “When is the next time?”

Chapter Four

Robbing the Dead Man

Anne walked out of the Regional Public Health Promoting Hospital to where she parked the motorcycle with enthusiasm. Today, she and her husband were going to celebrate their one-year anniversary. Of course, she had to dress nicely and looked her best waiting for her beloved husband to pick her up from home. You could call it luck that she found a partner who lives near her work. Anne's husband owns a garage. The two met by accident when the man dropped by at the hospital to consult about getting a tetanus booster after he was cut by a metal. He showed up for a second time with food specifically for Anne. That was two years ago.

She rode her motorcycle from the RPHPH to the community. Today, she chose another path to go home because she wanted to stop by one of the patients' house to check out the wound she just helped cleaning. When she veered into a narrow alleyway on the right, she noticed something unusual.

There was a dark silhouette in the middle of the road. When Anne rode her motorcycle closer, she found that it was a corpse of a black puppy. Its head was shattered as if something crushed it. Crimson blood splashed all over the road. Anne covered her mouth, trying to muffle up her sound. She immediately accelerated to leave that area. The puppy must've been run over by a car. She tried to erase that distressing image from her mind.

Anne rode her motorcycle for another 100 meters and found another carcass on the side of the road. It was a black chicken that

looked like it was recently killed. The blood was still vivid red, flowing out of its neck.

“What’s happening here...” Anne muttered and slowed down the vehicle, trying to look around for something unusual. She tried to convince herself that the very same car must have been driving so fast that it hit the puppy, and then the chicken.

“Anne!” The young nurse jumped at the sound of a woman. She trampled on a brake and turned her head. Aunty Kum Eui, a diabetes patient whom Anne knows very well, walked to her. “Anne, did you see that?”

“W...what?” Anne’s voice quivered slightly.

“Lots of strange things happened recently. Animals died like flies. And so do the sick people. Funerals are happening everywhere.” Aunty Kum Eui shook her head. “The village headman asked whether we should get together and make merit at the temple. Things might be better.”

“It sounds like a good idea, Aunty Eui. I also have a bad feeling about this.” Talking with Kum Eui made her fear dwindle slightly.

“You know, someone told me there’s a ghou[13] roaming in the village recently.” Kum Eui whispered. “It must’ve come from Aye Sunthorn’s house. That family raises a ghou, but it must’ve starved. So now it comes out, in search of flesh and blood. Uncle Add’s three chickens have died. Aunty Sri’s little dog has also gone missing. The ghou must be so hungry that it brings ill people with them to underworld.”

A superstition and local people were inseparable. Even Anne, who graduated from the School of Health Sciences, also believed in supernatural that she had been told since her childhood. Although she was scared, she tried to calm down and find other principles or reasonable explanation as an anchor. “It might be some sort of animal epidemic, Aunty. I’ll tell the police to investigate this.”

“It’s not a disease, Anne. The animals were killed. That chicken was butchered. That dog was beaten to death.” The plump woman spoke with confidence. “It’s the ghou, Anne, I tell you. We must find the person it possesses.”

Anne shouldn't have feared the unproven existence of that thing, but the eyes filled with confidence of the middle-aged lady before her made her started getting goosebumps from her head to her arms. "I'll have an officer to look into this." Anne insisted on her words before she accelerated her bike and left the road as quick as possible.



"Hey, I've to go."

"Have you arrived at the crime scene?"

"Almost"

"I still miss you."

Wasan intentionally exhaled into the phone so that the person at the end of the line could hear. He took a glance at Sergeant Narong who was driving and acting like he wasn't listening. "You should hurry back to work."

"Sure. I'll call you again after work."

"You know, people don't have to call each other three times a day after meals the way you prescribe your patients." Wasan spoke in a firm voice.

The baritone at the end of the line laughed. "And you don't have to use that tone, like when you use with the criminal, with me. Keep working hard. And don't forget to find something to eat."

Wasan hung up and kept the phone into his bag. When he looked back to his left, he saw that Sergeant Narong was glancing at him with a slight smile.

"You don't have to be shy, Captain, talking to your girlfriend in front of others isn't that bad."

"Not a girlfriend, Sergeant," Wasan put on his police hat. "Not yet."

The crime scene was a half-timbered house in the village area, 3 kilometers from the main road. It was in one of the most closely packed community areas. Wasan received a report of a break-in and some property in the house was stolen. The informant was the daughter of the recently deceased owner.

When he stepped out of the car, the first thing that caught Wasan's eyes was a coffin with a blanket of flowers and a photo of

the male deceased in front of it.

After listening to the daughter of the late house owner, it appeared that her father just passed away from a terminal stage colorectal cancer yesterday. This morning, after the first night rite, the daughter found a trace of the break-in through the window. Valuable items such as gold necklaces and the cash that her father kept were all gone.

“Is there anything else missing?” Wasan inspected around the bed that once belonged to the owner of the house.

“No, sir. Mostly, they were daddy’s gold and money.” The grievous young woman said while wiping her tears away. “There’re lots of guests attending the funeral yesterday. Many of them walked in and out of the house. Honestly, I’ve no idea who did this.”

“If it’s convenient to enter and exit, then there was no need to break in and enter through that window.” Wasan pointed at the wooden window that had signs of forced entry. “I think that the burglar entered after you went to bed. Is there anyone stay behind for the reception after the funeral?”

“I asked the guests not to stay too late for the drinks, so everyone left around 11 p.m.^[14] I closed the door and got some rest because I was exhausted from several nights of looking after my dad until the day he passed away. I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow. When I woke up, I saw that some items were stolen. I’ve even checked my dad’s gold necklace before I went to bed.”

Wasan looked at a basket full of medicine bags on the headboard. He saw a bottle of liquid drug and a word ‘Morphine’ was written on it. His thought wandered to Dr. Guntapat. He must be a specialist in this kind of drugs. “Is that medicine belong to your father?”

“Yes. I still can’t throw it away. It’s hard to get rid of something belong to your loved one.” The young lady wiped away her tears with the back of her hand.

Wasan nodded. “I understand. My mom has just passed away too.”

He took a glance at a doctor appointment letter of the patient name Mr. Nipol Gongkum, placing near the medicine bags. The appointer was Doctor Guntapat. Captain Wasan furrowed his

eyebrows. Wherever he went, this name would appear, especially when it was associated with terminal patients.

“Captain!” A man’s voice called Wasan from the front of the house. “We know who did it!”

“What?” Wasan swiftly walked outside. He then saw a chaotic scene of two men dragging a thin man toward him. Wasan knitted his eyebrows when he smelled the alcohol emitting from that man. Then, the man who called out for Wasan handed him the gold necklace and a stack of cash to him.

“I saw this guy took a stack of cash out in the grocery nearby. He stole money to buy some liquors. Put him behind bars!”

“No! Not me!” The accused struggled to break free from the capture. “Last night, I drank at a tiny bar near the street and someone handed them to me. I didn’t steal from this house!”

“Liar! You’re caught red-handed. You’re the one who took ’em!” A female villager in the crowd shouted out in high-pitched voice.

“Are these items your father’s?” Wasan handed a gold necklace and a stack of cash to the young lady.

She nodded her head while receiving the stolen items with tears rolling all over her face. “Yes, they are”

“Hey!”

A sudden shout of the men who was holding the suspect attracted Captain Wasan’s attention. The drunkard took the opportunity when everyone was focusing on the house owner, jerking himself loose and swiftly ran away to the front yard.

Without hesitating, Wasan took off with speed towards the suspect who was trying to escape. He was strong and fast, so only a few seconds, he caught up with the thin man who reeked of liquor and charged at him. The momentum sent the two of them tumbled down the road. Wasan mounted on the suspect, sat on top of him, and put his hands behind his back.

“I swear I wasn’t the thief, Officer!” The man cried out while Wasan was handcuffing him.

“Let’s talk at the police station.” Wasan stood up, letting Sergeant Narong pull the culprit up. Although the drunkard kept saying that he wasn’t the one who stole the stuff in that house and claimed that a

man dressed in black, wearing a hygienic mask, was the one who gave him the cash and the necklace, Wasan still wasn't convinced about this story. They had to investigate further into this and gather more evidence. At least, the young lady, who had just lost her beloved father, had already got the treasure of sentimental value back.



“Captain, no matter how wealthy or powerful you are; Death is inevitable.” Gunn’s words sent chills down Wasan’s spine. “There’re only two types of deaths: a good death and a bad one. It depends on the merits you’ve been doing. Your merits lead you to a peaceful death while your sins lead to indescribable suffering.”

Wasan turned to look at his conversation partner who was strolling beside him. Right now, they were walking on the sidewalk in front of the market full of late-night restaurants. Gunn still wore his short lab coat over his shirt, which was considered a unique trait of clothing. There was a golden pen in his lab coat’s pocket, and Wasan didn’t care to ask how expensive it was. “There’s no way normal persons could discuss this stuff with such calmness.”

“You’re saying I’m not normal?”

“Yes. You’re a strange doctor.”

Gunn laughed. “Actually, the suffering of birth, aging, sickness, and death is an unavoidable truth. I’ve learned and understood all of this cycle of life. When people were born, they came to obstetricians. When they were just a kid, they went to pediatricians. When they were old and sick, they went to other specialists, and when they were about to die, they needed a doctor like me.”

“Ever since I was born, I’ve never met anyone obsessed with death...I mean...studied this kind of stuff.”

“Obsessed about ‘a good and peaceful death’ is more like it.” Gunn’s eyes seemed brighter with enthusiasm when he got to speak about the topic he had been researching for so long to someone.

Wasan stopped to look at Gunn’s handsome face.

“What kind of a 33-year-old man is, to be interested in death?”

“The kind of a man who wanted the older guy think I’m interesting and outstanding,” Gunn smiled broadly. “So that maybe he’d turn this way and accept my feelings.”

Wasan could feel the corners of his lips curled up into a smile, but he tried to control his poker face so that another man wouldn’t see. When was the last time he had acted like a boy having a crush on somebody like this? However, he didn’t want to express himself too much. “When you took care of my mom, did she tell you about me?”

“Many things.”

“What did she say?”

“Well...” Gunn took the liberty of touching Wasan’s back while they were walking. “She said you’re a little devil of the family. You’re so much younger than your brothers. You like to make them worried about you, but in the end, you gave them the peace of mind by getting into the Royal Police Cadet Academy, became a cop, and the pride of the family. She said she’s proud of you.”

Wasan closed his eyes. What Gunn said was all true. “Mom must’ve trusted you very much, otherwise she wouldn’t tell you so many things.”

“She also told me she was worried that you’re still single, and you’ve never brought a girlfriend to meet her.” Gunn looked at Wasan with a gentle smile.

“She always wanted a daughter-in-law. It would make her even more devastated if I brought a man home instead.”

“You’re quite bold.”

“I knew that I’m gay even before I joined the Royal Police Cadet Academy. I realized it when I’d a thought of pushing a male senior onto bed.”

They burst out at the same time. Right now, the atmosphere between the two was so relaxing. Gunn noticed that it was a great timing, so he moved his hand up to hold another man’s shoulder. Wasan didn’t reject the action.

Everything between them was so simple. They met, said hello, got to know each other, and now they were getting closer. Wasan could

see that they would continue moving forward, but how far it would go was the hinge of destiny.

“Can I go to your place?” Wasan asked the question that every listener would know how flirtatious it was.

Suddenly, Gunn’s expression changed. His hand, once on Wasan’s shoulder, moved back to its owner’s side. That relaxing atmosphere became tense. “Had we better go to the hotel?”

Wasan knitted his eyebrows before quickly looking downward. He didn’t know why Gunn’s attitude changed like this when he talked about home. Well, he forgot that he wasn’t in a position to enter another man’s house whenever he wanted. They might need more time to get closer. “I forgot to ask if you’re okay to bring me over to your house.”

“How about we go to your place?”

“Right now, I’m staying with my brother and his wife. I’m afraid I can’t take you there.”

“A hotel seems to be our best choice.” Gunn bent down and nuzzled Wasan’s earlobe and neck.

Wasan felt like an electric current ran down from his head to his arms. Gunn’s baritone voice made him unable to move further. The Doctor’s mystery and danger strangely intrigued Wasan as if the adrenaline rushed through his entire body. “Shall we go now?”

He didn’t understand why he brought himself into this situation with a man he just met for only a few weeks. The man whom he still considered a stranger, but strangely attractive. He wanted to know more about him. He wanted to know what the man thinks, to be near him, to be touched by him, hugged by him, kissed by him. He wanted to challenge that dangerous aura emitting from this seductive gaze and voice which were hard to refuse. Wasan knew that he was playing with fire, but he felt like it was worth the risk.

Wasan’s strong body was voluntarily bare to the man before him. He watched the tall man who was bracing himself above him. Yes, they were getting far beyond what they intended, but Wasan begged not to have sex this time. Gunn gladly cooperated. Only the touch on their bodies was enough to set Wasan on fire, and he could feel that the Doctor encountered the same fate. Every kiss from Gunn was

firm while his hands caressed Wasan's skin, making him forget himself. The hand around his manhood moved passionately that Wasan couldn't think of anything else, except the touch from the man in front of him. How long has the time flew, he couldn't quite tell. In the end, their fire of lust was extinguished with satisfaction.

"Wasan," Gunn spoke while kissing on the man's neck. The two naked bodies were cuddling on the bed, when Gunn took Wasan by his chin and made him look back at him. "I think we're getting along well."

"You think so?" Wasan closed his eyes to accept the taste of kiss that another man gently gave him.

"Is it too soon to ask you to be my boyfriend?"

Wasan went silent for a long time. "Too soon."

Gunn's sharp eyes looked at him pleadingly. "But I like you very much."

"That's not gonna work. It's too soon." Wasan put his hand over the handsome face and pushed him away. He snatched a towel up to cover his body and turned his back to Gunn. "What just happened was a part of the process of getting to know each other."

"You'll say yes before long. I'm positive that we'll be great together." Gunn kissed Wasan on the cheek one more time before rolling over to switch off the light at the headboard.

"Don't be so cocky."

Gunn smiled in the dark, and draped his arm over his tonight bedmate, sharing the warm from his body to render another man a good night sleep. "Goodnight, Wasan."

Chapter Five

Som's Hallucination

After the light in the male medical ward was partially turned off so that the patients could rest, a nurse assistant in a yellow uniform walked back to a nurse station. She smiled at a young nurse who was diligently receiving orders from the papers night shift doctors gave her.

“There’re so many orders for the middle zone.” Narm, the young nurse, raised her head to look at the clock. It was her last night shift this week. Now, she just wanted to go home and sleep at nighttime like other people.

“Well, of course, each intubation case doesn’t look so good, especially the patient on bed number 6. We never know if he’ll ever get to remove the ET.”

“We’ve been caring for such cases for so long, don’t you think?” Narm stood up after she finished scanning the physicians’ orders for the pharmacy. “I’ll go prepare the medicine.”

“Go and give medicine to the patients, Narm. Then we can eat this spicy mango salad together.”

“Spicy mango salad shouldn’t be eaten at 1 a.m., don’t you think?” Narm said while laughing, before walking straight to a cart containing enteral and parenteral medicine prepared for each patient. She turned to look at the hospital bed in ‘the middle zone.’

This male medical ward was a general ward. The beds were arranged in a zone, sorting by numbers as it was easy to remember and care for. The middle zone was the center of critically ill patients who needed close observation, and was the closest zone to the nurse

station. Almost all of the patients in the middle zone had their own endotracheal tube and they had been on a number of medications for 24 hours. They were the patients whom she cannot bear to fail with her duty.

Suddenly, Narm noticed a shadow figure swaying outside louvre windows between the ward and the balcony outside. She jumped. Her heart was beating fast and hard. She quickly walked to a switch near the window and turned the lights on, and slowly bent down to peek at the gap of the louvre window. The lights on the road shed the dim light inside, so she was unable to see much of a detail. However, she didn't notice anything unusual.

Narm took a deep breath to calm herself down. That shadow might be only a visual illusion. She turned back and walked to the metal cart to prepare the medicine.

At that instant, she heard the cardiac monitor rang alarmingly.

Narm whipped her head around and saw that it was the patient in bed number 6. The device rang because there was something wrong with the patient's electrocardiography. Narm ran to look at him. She pressed the button of the device to measure the patient's blood pressure and blood oxygen level in order to report the physician on duty immediately.

Before blood pressure level even appeared, his electrocardiogram waves had already become a horizontal line.

Narm reached out her hand to check his pulse. She cursed slightly before shouting. "A cardiac arrest![\[15\]](#)"



Dr. Bunnakit stared at a lifeless, pale body on a steel table in front of him with hands on his hips. Anun, a prominent assistant officer from Forensic Department, took out an organ from the deceased chest. The organ that once had been incessantly beating from the moment he was born to the moment it gave up and stopped beating last night.

Bunnakit received the organ to inspect externally before placed it on a cutting board. "the heart is enlarged and as thin as a coffee

filter.”

“That should’ve been obvious enough, Dr. Bunn.” The tiny middle-aged man shook his head. “I don’t know what the family members still suspected of.”

“The patient’s family members said that the cardiologist told them the patient’s heart rhythm wasn’t so bad, and that he could’ve lived for a good while if there’s no acute heart attack. Also, the deceased said he wanted to live until his second grandchild is born, but he passed away so suddenly. They still couldn’t cope with their loss. They’re skeptical about the cause of death, so they requested an autopsy.” Bunnakit used a scalpel to cut open in a cross section to observe the coronary artery. He found no clogged blood vessels. “We couldn’t really blame them. Sadness and grief made them do something that we might think nonsense. But it’s necessary for coping with their grief.”

“What do you think about this case?”

“I found evidence of heart failure in several organs.” Bunnakit cut open the heart to show thin cardiac muscles which was swollen like a balloon. “I’ve reviewed the patient’s chart. This man had sepsis conditions as well as an acute renal failure, and all of these could cause heart failure.”

Anun prepared a needle and surgical thread to sew everything back in place. Bunnakit took his gloves and his green lab coat off, then walked towards his desk and recorded what he found into the chart.

It had been 3 years since he worked in this forensic department, but after all this time, Bunnakit had never felt that an autopsy was boring. He loved his job. Actually, he didn’t want to leave this place. Nonetheless, there were a lot of reasons why he decided to go back home in the metropolis, and he would have to pack his things in a couple of months.

“Bunn”

Bunnakit put down his pen when he heard someone called his name and turned around to smiled at the caller.

“Hello, Gunn.” Bunnakit stood up to greet the man who was his senior. He was a family physician and one of the best palliative care

physicians. “How can I help you?”

“Director Somsak told me to see if there is any problem.”

“You know, he could’ve called me directly. You shouldn’t have to trouble yourself.” Bunnakit gestured to the deceased. “From what I’ve gathered, he must’ve died from a disease. Nothing unusual.”

Guntapat nodded at that answer before saying, “Director Somsak is going to open a new six-bed medical ward for terminal stage patients and let me be in charge. So, I’ve to be nice to him. Whatever he wanted from me, I’ve to do it for him.” He said amusingly. And that made Bunnakit laugh. “Kidding. I just wanna talk to you, Bunn. I want your recommendation on basic autopsy textbooks. The one focuses on Toxicology would be nice.”

Bunnakit raised his eyebrows. “What do you want it for?”

“Sometimes people ask me about forensic issues, so I don’t want to give them wrong answers.”

“The FM doctor^[16] really need to learn beyond his specialty.” Bunnakit asked with his brows frowned. “I’ll send you a list of textbooks and lend you the rare ones. Can you come here to see me again tomorrow? Or I can bring it to the Medical Department.”

“I’ll drop by. Please do me a favor, Bunn.” Guntapat smiled at Bunnakit. It was a smile that made his face looked even more handsome. “Will you excuse me? I’ve a patient to visit.”

Bunnakit nodded, his eyes followed the tall figure of Guntapat disappearing around the corner. Guntapat and him weren’t particularly close. He only respected him as one of his senior physicians and colleagues.

Bunnakit used to have confidence on his precise instinct, but he had learned to be humbler—the hardest way—ever since that incident.

Not too long ago, he had performed an autopsy on a woman dying by hanging and mistook a person for a murderer of her. That followed by many chaos; he was threatened for his life, beaten, and abducted. It was a lesson that warned Bunnakit to be more careful before making any decisions.

However, this time, those feelings came back again. It was the same feeling that Bunnakit felt whenever he met someone who was

holding a secret.

This man emitted a nasty level of suspiciousness.

He tried to erase this thought from his mind. He had learned not to be overly confident with his instinct. And he didn't want to make the same mistake. Bunnakit walked back to his desk, finishing an autopsy report before he would do another autopsy scheduled for half an hour later.



“Excuse me, coming through...sorry.” Tae, the public health technical officer of the Regional Public Health Promoting Hospital, hurried to the place that was now full of people. When the middle-aged man had broken through the crowd, he found an incredibly shocking scene.

Before him was a one-story, old, wooden house which was falling apart and almost inhabitable. In the vast front lawn, there were unattended trees and tall grass. On the ground, lied the carcasses of butchered chickens. Their feathers were scattered. The metallic smell of blood spread in the air; it could make one felt nauseous. Moreover, there were bloated bodies of dogs lying in the same area.

“God damn it.” Tae drew his eyebrows together. He gazed at the man next to him. “So, where is the owner of this house?”

“*It's* still in the house, Dr. Tae, but no one is brave enough to enter. We're waiting for the police to come and drag *it* out.

“*It* only butchered animals but didn't kill anyone, right?”

“Nobody disappeared, but apparently, a lot of sick people have died.” The local guy spoke with confidence. “*It's* a ghoulish for sure, Dr. Tae. And it must be a starving ghoulish because the owner neglected to feed it. So, it possessed Som and ate raw chicken and dog like that. *It* also devoured the spirit of sick and weak people until they died. That's why the monks've been so occupied with funerals”

Tae sighed. Although he still believed in ghosts deep in his heart because he also grew up with this myth, but the rational side of him—as he had graduated from the school of science—forced him to try thinking of another reason why Som, the owner of this house, had to

do such dreadful thing publicly. “Som might be deranged. He’d a drug abuse record before. He might also have a hallucination.”

“No, Dr. Tae. It’s the ghoul. The ghoul for sure.”

Tae ended the conversation when he thought it was purposeless. He walked out of the crowd and found that there was a police car drove straight to park near the scene. Tae smiled broadly when he saw the person who got off that car. It was Captain Wasan.

“Uncle Tae” Wasan raised his hand to greet the older man. “Seems like a mess.”

“That way” Tae pointed at the direction of the house where the villagers were gathering.

“What’s he like? Do you know the man name ‘Som’ that the villagers said was possessed by a ghost?”

“Som’s been living alone in that house for a long time. About 4-5 years ago he’s arrested on a drug possession charge and he’s sent to drug rehabilitation. After he came back home, he kept himself from the society for a long while. He came to RPHPH to request for antidiarrheals a couple of times. That’s all I know about Som. Captain should ask other people. You might find more useful information.

“I must go into the house before Som does something dangerous. Please tell the crowd to move back for now.” Wasan turned to nod at Sergeant Narong. He reached to touch his gun holster at his waist and told the crowd to move aside for the police officers. At the same time, Tae helped shouting to tell everyone to move away as far as possible from the house.

Wasan opened the door of the old wooden house covered with dust and cobwebs. The house was dark and somber inside, and there was no fresh air to breathe. He and his colleague quietly crept forward, trying to be alert at all time, in case an unexpected situation occurred.

“Som!” Wasan called out. “Don’t be afraid. This is the police. Please come out.”

After Wasan finished talking, the two officers heard something fall hard onto the floor in another room. Wasan pulled out his gun from the holster and carried it firmly in his hands. He turned to look at the

door on the right. He gave a signal to Sergeant Narong and swiftly opened that wooden door.

What they saw was a thin man curled up in the corner of the room. He wore old, tearing cloth. His hair was long, as well as his messy beard. His hands and feet covered in crimson blood. The eyes that looked up at them were in terror.

Wasan lowered down his gun immediately when he saw the helplessness of the man before him.



“So, Som was hallucinating, Uncle Tae.” Wasan sat on a chair opposite to Tae’s desk in RPHPH. “He hadn’t spoken anything when we took him to interrogate at the police station. We didn’t know if he’s been using drugs or anything, so we took him to run a drug test at the hospital. He’s neither drunk nor had been taking illegal drugs, but the doctor said he suffered from hallucination. Som said the Grim Reaper told him to slaughter the animals he saw. He seems like schizophrenia or something of the sort.”

Tae sighed. “I knew it, he’s insane. Did you know the villagers thought that Som was possessed by the ghoul that the owner of a drinking water company, Sunthorn, had nurtured?”

“Why did the villagers have to go after Uncle Sunthorn?”

“Because Sunthorn started a business and was richer than everyone else. So, he’s accused of practicing black magic.”

Wasan laughed slightly. “Oh, boy. Fortunately, the hallucination didn’t kill anyone.”

Tae thought of something. “Speaking of the dead, the villagers believe that the ghoul possessing Som causes the sick people to die more.”

He was about to shake his head at the superstition that he thought was absurd, but then something caught his instinct. Captain Wasan raised his head to look at Tae. “More sick people have died?”

“These past few years, a lot of terminal stage patients who return home have died abruptly. Of course, they died from their illness, but it’s just that the number has increased from the previous years.

Normally, we could estimate the span of time the patients with terminal stage cancer have left, whether it be months, weeks, or days. But now, no matter how much time we determined they have, some of them who seemingly could've lived for several months, when they got home, they all died within a few days." After telling the story, Tae turned back to his files at the shelves by the desk. Wasan knitted his eyebrows after receiving this information. "But I think there're no particular reason. Death is unpredictable. It might be the timing, the weather, or something beyond our control. It's a good thing these terminal stage patients didn't have to suffer any longer. You should be the one who understands it well."

Wasan went silent for a few seconds. He couldn't describe what he felt right now. He could feel that all situations he had encountered were so suspicious. The word 'terminal patient' came into his life every day. His suffering mother had passed away no longer than a month, and the previous case was also associated with terminal patient who had just passed away.

Even the man whom he just had an intimate relationship on the bed was a specialist in palliative care.

"What the hell is this?" Wasan complained with himself. Tae seemed startled when he cursed. "Uncle Tae, can I see the terminal patient's statistic data in the last three years? I want to see that unusual number."

"I only have the record in my responsible district. But I'll send it to you. Give me a couple of days. It seems like there're some cases I haven't updated. Do you want other districts' records as well? I'll contact them for you."

"That'd be great, thank you." Wasan got to his feet. "I've to get going. Don't want to bother you any longer."

Wasan walked out of the RPHPH building. He took a deep breath, trying to calm himself. He wouldn't jump to a conclusion while he didn't have enough information in his hands. It might be just a natural death and it might be just a coincidence that he got involved with terminal patients.

Chapter Six

The Thief Who Does Not Steal

“What are you thinking?”

The deep baritone voice of a man whispered close to Wasan ear, followed by a touch from his lips on the back of Wasan's neck with a warm breath. His long, slender hands moved to hug Wasan from behind and caressed the skin underneath Wasan's T-shirt. The shirt was pulled up, revealing his abdomen and his chest. He could sense the firm touch on his erogenous zone. Wasan closed his eyes, sending a humming sound from his throat. Right now, they were using a room in the same hotel to spend their time together at night again. Wasan, who was sitting absentmindedly on a chair near the window, was distracted by Gunn's arousing touch.

“You have no need to know other people's thoughts.”

“But I want to know yours.” Gunn still continued moving with his hands. Whatever thoughts in Wasan's head began to get mixed up like a river getting muddy. “You have something you want to tell me?”

“Gunn...” Wasan caught the naughty hands and hold them still before he was going to forget what he wanted to say. “As a doctor, what do you think is the reason that a lot of critically ill patients died in the same period of time?”

Gunn backed away from Wasan, walking to sit on the edge of the bed. “It could be several reasons. Some types of disease could be predicted. If the patients got sick during the same period, they might likewise die just about the same time.” Gunn pondered. “What else? The weather might also affect the patients with lung cancer or

emphysema, or it could be other environmental factors such as pollution in the soil, the water, and the air, that makes sick people died.”

Wasan crossed his leg, intertwining his hands on his lap, while looking at Gunn with an expression that difficult to read. “What if it happened in our area, how would you explain it?”

Gunn smiled. “At present, there’re many things that science couldn’t explain. There is no 100% certainty in medical practice. This is what I’ve been taught. If you tried to get an answer from a doctor, what you’re going to get is ‘maybe’, ‘might’, or ‘expect.’ It depends on how much research has been done on the topic being asked.”

“You didn’t really answer my question.” Wasan pointed out, looking irritated. “I just wanted your opinion. There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. This was what we discuss in private. There’s no need to cite tons of evidence”

“I might try to collect the research data to find factors related to the increasing death rate. It might take a while until I find the best answer.” Gunn got to his feet after he finished talking. He then took his shirt off, revealing a muscular upper body. He approached Wasan like a lion approached his prey.

The answer that Wasan wanted was still up in the air. He was distracted by another man’s pampering touch. Wasan pushed his doubts aside and followed through the reason why they were in the same room now. Gunn pulled Wasan up and pushed him against the window, before bending down to kiss him devouringly.

Five minutes later, they were lying in bed, naked. Their clothes were left on the floor beside the bed.

“Stick to what we agreed.” Wasan ordered with a resolute voice.

“Will you handcuff me if I don’t follow your order?”

“You can try if you want to know what will happen next.”

“But I’ve condoms today.”

Wasan squeezed a chin of the man on top of him. “Not in a million years.”

Gunn chuckled. “A million year isn’t that far.” He grabbed the hand on his chin and pinned it onto the bed, then leaned down to kiss the man lying beneath him. Wasan closed his eyes, accepting pleasure

from the other man. Gunn's lips moved from Wasan's mouth to his chin, his neck, his chest, and continued moving downward.



“I’m really sorry, Captain. I’m handling an assault case at the bar, and I also have to go investigating a deadly car crash at another place. It’s quite far.”

Wasan sighed when he heard noise in the background while the Lieutenant spoke. “Today seems like a busy day. It’s okay. I can go myself. The crime scene isn’t far from our office, anyway.”

“Thank you, Captain Wasan.” Pol.Lt. Umnart, a duty officer, who stayed on the night shift with Wasan, hung up the phone.

Wasan slid his chair away from the desk full of the unfinished case files, snatching his police uniform jacket from the hanger behind him to wear over his crew shirt. He had just received a report from the patrol officer that there was a home invasion. The neighbor was the one who saw a figure trying to force open the window and climb inside. The patrol officers said that they didn’t find the intruder when they arrived at the scene, but they found the evidence of attempted break-in.

Since the other investigators were busy solving their own case, and the crime scene wasn’t far from the police station, Captain Wasan decided to go there himself. He took out the phone to check the time. It was 9.20 p.m. He also hoped to see Gunn’s LINE messages on the screen, but he hadn’t contacted him for several hours now. Wasan didn’t think of anything more than Gunn must have taken a nap or been busy somewhere.

Thinking of Gunn, his thought also wandered to what happened last night. The touch from the younger man was still lingered on his skin. Wasan admitted that he liked it and longed for that sensual temptation. If Gunn was to invite him to spend time together again at night, he wouldn’t refuse. There was always a magnetic force pulling them together. It was an infatuation that he couldn’t comprehend where it came from. However, that still wasn’t enough for him to give

his heart to Gunn. Wasan needed more time to get to know the mysterious man.

Wasan casted off his doubt about what Gunn was doing, and kept his phone in his pocket before hurriedly left his office. The fact that the crime scene was located near the police station allowed Wasan to reach there in 10 minutes. The first thing he saw was one of the patrol officers ran toward him with a panic expression.

“Yes?” Wasan had a bad feeling after seeing that expression.

“The person in that house doesn’t look so good! I just called the ambulance.”

“Doesn’t look so good?” Wasan furrowed his brows, “You mean the person in the house that was broken in?”

“Yes, sir. When I arrived, I didn’t see the intruder. The daughter of the house owner didn’t even know someone had broken in her house through window. When she invited me in, I saw the patient on his bed. At first, he’s just sleeping, but after I inspected the signs of breaking in and talked to his daughter for a while, he began to have trouble in breathing. Do you want to take a look inside?”

Wasan rushed into the house. The first thing he heard was a wailing sound. When he walked through a door and entered another room, he saw the woman holding an extremely skinny old man who was having a breathing difficulty on the bed. There was a nasal cannula connected between his nose and an oxygen cylinder. The woman cried harder when she saw Wasan entering the room, momentarily forgot that her house had been intruded.

“The police already called the ambulance. Don’t be scared.” Wasan consoled the woman in a local dialect, then rushed to look at the patient on the bed. “What’s wrong with your Pa?”

“Cancer...” She answered with a tearful face. “A final stage lung cancer.”

A final stage

This word made Wasan went numb from his head to toes as if someone splashed icy water at him. He turned stiff like a stone, so still that the woman began to wonder if he was fine.

He was a cop who had been highly trained. He had a strong body and mind. Never once did he was so astounded that he didn’t know

what to do.

The stertorous sound from the patient's throat brought Wasan back to his sense. It didn't matter whether this case was another mystery. The man before him needed help right now.

"Pa...Pa!!" The woman screamed when the old man's limbs started to stretch out and jerk uncontrollably.

Wasan had some basic resuscitation from trainings a long time ago, so he decided to flip the patient to lie on his side to prevent mucus from getting to his lungs. However, further treatment was beyond Wasan's knowledge. While they were waiting for the ambulance, he decided that he should call someone with the knowledge to see if he could do something else for the patient. Wasan moved from the bed and pulled his phone out to call Dr. Guntapat right away.

He and Gunn were close enough that he didn't have to be very considerate. Wasan was positive that Gunn wouldn't mind helping him during the middle of the night.

A long period of listening to the ringback tone made Wasan's heart sunk. He pressed the call button again after the signal was gone. The result was the same.

Gunn didn't pick up his call.

The patrol officer held the old man still. He looked around, unable to do anything; no different from Wasan. "What should we do? Should we insert something into his mouth?"

"Don't—tsk!" Wasan made a sound of irritation because the person he called didn't pick up his phone in this critical moment. He knew Gunn wasn't on an out-of-hours duty tonight. Well, they needed to talk when he got back to him. "When will the ambulance arrive?"

Another half minute had passed, the old man's body began to cease tense up. The patient's face was awfully pale. His lips began to turn blue. "Captain! Grandpa's seizure has stopped, and now he isn't breathing!"

"Shit!" Wasan cursed, putting his phone back to his pocket. "Do the CPR. Do it, now!"



Wasan didn't know if the home intrusion without stealing was related with the death of Chartchai, the lung cancer patient who had a seizure, stopped breathing, and died in the ICU at the hospital. What he could do was to recommend an autopsy, which the deceased's daughter decided to do so because she wanted to find out the real cause of death. If they couldn't find any evidence that indicated other causes of death, except for dying from the illness, then Wasan could turn his attention to other directions.

However, it was obvious that now Wasan got involved in too many terminal patient cases. It was too much to be just a coincidence.

After he registered the corpse with the hospital to wait for the autopsy from a forensic pathologist, Wasan travelled back to the police station at 2 a.m., feeling exhausted. Fortunately, there were no other reports came in to double his weariness.

For a moment, he looked at the pile of case files that might take a million years to finish with a blank expression, before deciding that he wouldn't take a nap tonight. The dawn would come in a couple of hours. Wasan had to go to the court at daybreak, following by two interrogatories. Taking a nap would make him even more sleepy. So, he might just drop by his house around 5 a.m. to take a bath.

Wasan always asked himself why he had to be in a division that must do everything from soup to nuts, when everyone else escaped from this type of work. He also had to command a deeper legal knowledge than the other officers. But since he was going to be a Detective Inspector anytime soon, there was no reason for him to give up just now.



“I dropped the phone in a void inside my sofa. I was completely unaware of this. The sound was turned off and I didn't hear the vibration.” Gunn hugged Wasan tightly from behind while trying to explain what had happened. “Also, I dozed

off around 9 p.m. and got up at dawn. I didn't really know you called. I didn't mean to ignore your call. Please don't be mad, Babe."

"It's nothing serious. It's just that if you'd picked up the phone, the patient might've survived." Wasan walked away from the embrace. He took off his t-shirt to take a shower.

He knew that although Gunn did pick up his call, the chance the patient would survive might not have increased that much anyway. However, he couldn't help pretending to be mad to make the man feel guilty that he dared not to pick up his phone.

"Do you want to find something to eat? It's on me."

"I don't eat supper." Wasan saw Gunn's gaze roaming his symmetrically sculpted upper body with satisfaction. "If you're hungry, then go by yourself."

"How can I make you stop being angry?"

"Help me analyze the recent incident and I will. I won't take your vague answers like the last time."

"Alright" Gunn approached him and held Wasan's hand loosely. "I think that there're two possibilities. One, he died from a natural cause. Two, he died from an unnatural cause."

"What do you mean?"

Gunn's expression changed. His dark brown eyes looked so mysterious and possessed some sort of attraction that made Wasan go silent as if he was enchanted. "Dying from the unnatural cause could mean that someone had intentionally...ended the terminal patients' lives."

There was an awkward silence for a moment. This was what Wasan also had been thinking, but he didn't dare to speak it out. "If it really went that way, it'd be entirely another story."

"You can wait for an autopsy report from the latest case. If you find some evidence that might suggest this to be a murder case, it might be enough to think about this theory. If you still can't find anything, all you could do is just keeping this doubt to yourself and gathering further evidence."

"Let's say you're the one who did it, what would you do?"

"I've never thought about that because I'd never do such a thing."

Wasan didn't seem to like this answer. "As a person who has medical knowledge, you must've some ideas. Imagine that you've got to do it for some reasons. How would you do it?"

Gunn thought for a moment. "I might try to overdose the patient. Most of these patients would be given the morphine to ease the pain. Receiving morphine overdose might result in respiratory depression. Other way is to inject them with some medicine that make them fall asleep until they stop breathing, such as the sedative, or give them potassium which will result in Arrhythmia"

"That means the one who could do it must be a medical practitioner."

"It could be anyone who know how to inject through blue veins. Or the one who could order overdose morphine, which is easy to track down from the previous records." Gunn walked to the window, looking at the night view outside. The hotel they were staying was in the heart of the town, so there was some light from the streets, although there weren't a lot of cars running on the road at this time. "It's hard to disguise the case as a natural death, though. If it's me, no matter how much I want my patients to pass away peacefully, I couldn't do it. Even though most cases wouldn't go through an autopsy because the family members of the deceased thought that they died from the illness, I wouldn't take such risk."

I hope that's true. Wasan prayed silently.

He hoped this strange story had nothing to do with Gunn, so that he would spend his time with this man peacefully. At least, this time it wasn't Dr. Guntapat's regular patient. Wasan feel more relieved by this. All they had to wait for was Dr. Bunnakit's autopsy report which could confirm whether there was nothing other than a natural death from the terminal stage cancer.

However, all these didn't answer why he got involved with so many cases like this.

Chapter Seven

A Door to the Murder Case

Anun, the forensic lab's officer, watched Dr. Bunnakit insert a large needle in a heart and suck out crimson blood into a vacutainer tube^[17]. “There're blood losses in many organs, but no signs of physical injuries. Only injection-induced wounds at the crook of his arms and his groin from blood drawing. Also, there's a bruise on his chest and broken ribs caused by CPR.”

“Those lumps in the lung looked scary, Doc.” Anun protruded his lips at the cancerous tumor which had spread all over the lung, making the deceased's lung issue turned black and bumpy. In Anun's hands was a compact camera used during an autopsy. “Can't this be the cause of death?”

“I also thought that this could be a natural death, but the blood result from the emergency room couldn't give a clear explanation. Sodium was quite low. Potassium wasn't high. No bloodstream infection. He had an acidosis which might occur when his heart stopped beating. I've tried an arterial blood gas test^[18], but it's still hard to tell because the cardiac arrest happened since he's home” Bunnakit took off his gloves. “This man received morphine and Lorazepam^[19] from the medical ward when he left the hospital. We need to check his serum blood levels^[20] for further determination. From what we've asked the police, the family member of the patient confirmed that no medicines were missing or abnormally decreased. Anyway, we still have to be thorough because there's a report to the police that someone breaking in the deceased's house at that time.”

“So, this isn’t a normal case, Dr. Bunn.” Anun put the deceased’s name tag on the evidences Dr. Bunnakit retrieved from the body. “After closing him up, I’ll send the evidence to the University Hospital’s forensic lab. You should take some rest and drink some coffee, Dr. Bunn.”

“Please do me a favor, Anun” Bunnakit brought up the chart to record what he had found for a moment before placing it down on his desk, and then left the autopsy room. He stretched his body to get rid of the soreness from a long period of work.

Anun carried a foam box containing the vacutainer tubes for blood, urine, and pieces of evidence that Dr. Bunn retrieved from the body to the hospital garage. He made an appointment with Add, a hospital driver, to deliver this box to the toxicology laboratory of the University Hospital, which would take around 40 minutes from here, with other patients’ lab results that also needed to be sent there.

“Where is Add?” Anun made a disapproving noise when he walked into the garage and found no one there. Anun went and peek at a small office by the garage, but it was empty. Anun placed the box on someone desk in that room with irritation and called Add for a second time.

“Hey, *Aj*, please wait. I was asked to pick up the Director at the Provincial Public Health just now. I’ll be there in 10 minutes.” As soon as Add picked up the call, he anxiously explained the reason for his absence.

“Alright, alright. It’s okay. I’ll wait around here.”

“Are you in a hurry? You can leave the box in the vehicle office, so that you can go do something else.”

“No way! If the evidence disappears, I’ll be in big trouble.” Anun walked out of the garage area to avoid a dead zone with low connectivity “I’ve no other works that need my immediate attention. Plus, Dr. Bunn is resting. I’ll wait here.”

“Okay. Ten minutes!”

Anun hung up the phone and walked back to the Vehicle Department’s office. He thought he would see an empty room, but he then saw a silhouette of a human’s head moving furtively through louvre windows. He knitted his eyebrows and rushed to the office’s

door to determine what it was because he was quite sure that there was no one in there earlier.

Then, Anun collided with someone who rushed out of that room. He raised his head to look at the tall man before him. He was a young man with a fair, handsome face. He wore a short lab coat with black pants. At his chest, light green thread was embroidered in 'Chanchai Maneerat, Pharm.D.' Anun had no idea who was more shocked, but surely, the pharmacist's eyes were so big.

"Pharmacist Boze!" Anun shouted.

"Anun..." He said, sending Anun a dry smile. "What are you doing here?"

"I want Add to deliver the forensic lab evidence." Anun watched the young man with a doubtful gaze. "What are *you* doing around here?"

"I dropped something in the van when I went to visit a patient with Dr. Gunn yesterday." Boze smiled broadly and scratched his head bashfully. "But no one was here. I guess I've to come tomorrow."

"Who was the driver you went with that day? If it's Add, you could wait ten minutes. He's coming." Anun looked at his watch.

"Not Add. It's okay. I'll come again later." Boze sneaked past the door. "Excuse me."

"A...ah, see ya." Anun turned his head to look at the young man in the short lab coat, who quickly walked away, till he disappeared from his eyesight. Anun went back into the room, eyeing the foam box on the desk. Having a strange feeling, he rushed to that desk and opened the box.

Bags containing pieces of evidence were still there, sealed tightly with adhesive tape and on top of them was the tags with Dr. Bunnakit's signature. It was impossible to take away pieces of evidence inside without leaving a trace. Although he felt a little uneasy, Anun was quite sure that no one had taken anything from that box.

Ten minutes later, the driver of the hospital ran quickly to meet Anun in the room. He said the car was ready for the delivery.

Anun handed the foam box to Add, repeated the drop-off location and went back to the Forensic Department. His mission in that

afternoon was complete.



The appointment order had arrived. Right now, Pol. Capt. Wasan was officially elevated to Pol. Maj. Wasan Kumboonrueng, a detective inspector of this provincial police station.

He was standing before the picture of his mother in her charming youth. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She was smart, strong, and was able to raise her three sons so well despite all the trials and tribulations. Although their family was poor, Wasan's stomach had never been empty. He grew up to be a police officer with dignity because of the woman in the picture.

"Let me be her representative." Thongkum elaborately pinned an insignia—Thai theatrical crown above a star—of the new title on Wasan's shoulder. He raised the back of his hand to wipe away his tears a few times. "Inspector is the highest pride of our family. Mom was always happy singing your praises."

"The most honored son should be the one who could have taken care of her." Wasan looked at his mother's picture with an empty expression. "The one who should be praised is you, Thong, not me."

"I'm not good at studying as you, not as strong as you. All I could do was helping mom work at home. You've got a bright future ahead of you. Being a good leader is the right thing to do."

Wasan looked at his brand-new insignia on his shoulder with a tight feeling in his chest. He wanted his mother to see this so bad. She would've hugged him for so long, kissed his cheeks, and told him she would make his favorite Northern-style curry as a celebration, just like the time when he graduated from the Royal Police Cadet Academy.

He backed away from his mother's picture on the table, kneeled on the wooden floor, pressed his palms together at his chest, and prostrated himself down at his mother's picture. He tried not to cry, but he could feel tears brimming in his eyes. Wasan raised his head, and paid respect to his middle older-brother's picture next to his

mother's. He looked at his deceased family members' pictures and tried to calm down before standing up.

"Do you have any plans tonight? Gai has prepared tons of suppers." Gai was Thongkum's wife. She was Wasan's sister-in-law. The two of them helped take care of his mother until the last moment.

"I've no plan for tonight." Wasan pulled the hems of his uniform shirt out of his pants and pulled down his shirt's zip. "I think I'm gonna work at home. My case files were like a pile of mountain."

"Speaking of it, do you have so many late-night shifts? You rarely slept at home recently."

Wasan paused his hand while reaching for a hanger to hang his upper uniform. The answer was he had been sleeping with a man in a hotel recently, but Wasan would never let that answer slip out. His sexual orientation was kept as a secret, even to his family. "I was on duties, or sometimes I was drinking my ass off and passed out at my friend's house. A celebrity who just got back like me was busy with many events."

"I knew it! The police drinks like fish. Take it easy. If you damage your liver, I won't look after you!"

"Heh." Wasan chuckled, looking at his older brother's whining while walking into the kitchen filled with a rich and pleasant smell. "When I find a rental house I want, I'll move out. Don't miss your alcoholic-fatty-liver little brother."

"When you find a house, then hurry and find a wife, Inspector!"

Wasan shook his head after hearing a shout from the kitchen. He smiled broadly in a way that he hadn't do it for several days. His mother in the heaven must be happy to see how her remaining two sons were one in heart and mind.



Gunn stood watching an empty room before turning to look at the hospital director, who was crossing his arms and smirking, next to him. "Professor Somsak, you tried to overly please me lately."

“I didn’t try to please you. I tried to support you.” Somsak raised his hands like he was trying to measure something at the door. “There’ll be a sign here, stating, ‘Dr. Guntapat Akaramaytee’s Palliative Care Sector’”

Gunn laughed. “No need to put my name in there. In case other doctors took over it, you don’t have to change the sign.”

The tall, middle-aged physician turned to look at Gunn. Dr. Somsak was almost fifty years old, but the time couldn’t do anything to him. Despite his few strands of gray hairs and the fact that now he had to wear long-sightedness glasses, he was still tall and remained his good personality consistently. “You said like you wouldn’t be here for long, Gunn.”

Gunn shook his head and gave him a faint smile. “Now, I’ve no plan to move anywhere else, but we cannot foresee the future.” He walked inside the room that used to be the Nursing Department’s conference room. “I think the room is too big, if it’s just for the nurse and me.”

“Then, bring another doctor on board.”

“Other FM doctors ran away to do other jobs. There’s only me who still enjoys working in this field.” Gunn turned to look at the middle-aged hospital director who was leaning on the door frame. His tall body still looked well-built from regular workouts. “Thank you for the room, professor. Now, I’ve more space for storing my files in a separate proportion.”

“Tell me if you want more file cabinets. I’ll tell my men to arrange them for you.” Somsak looked at his watch. “I need to hurry to the meeting. You can think about the renovation. Send me a LINE message if you want anything.”

“Thank you.” Gunn showed him a gesture of gratitude.

Somsak accepted it before quickly walking away.

Gunn’s smiling face gradually become impassive. He turned to look at the vast, empty room which was going to be his office. It really was too big for two people: one doctor and one nurse. It would be great if they could divide the room for the patients’ family members to come studying home health care.

Since Dr. Gunn came to serve the service at this hospital in this province, the palliative care work that had been inconsistent for several years had improved significantly. Gunn had organized an entirely new system, whether it was the consulting system for outpatients and inpatients, and the coordination with home visiting network. He also organized the caregiver teaching teams, the special clinic for terminal stage patient care, as well as the data collection systems that had been implemented for more than two years. The standard indicators that had been set up showed a tendency to improve. That was why medical practitioners and nurses from other hospitals request for a study visit tour now and then. His contribution must have been doing great that Dr. Somsak gave him a personal office out of the blue, which was great news for him.

“Hello! I dropped by to look at your new office.” Dr. Ning’s voice rang from the door.

Gunn turned to face his colleague and smiled broadly. “Jealous?”

“What can I do to get another room like this?”

“You’ve to ask the Director or help me taking care of terminal stage patients.”

“I doubt the terminal stage patients would deliver a baby. I won’t be much great help to you.” The two let out a laugh at the same time. Ning walked toward Gunn with her hands behind her back. She looked at him with her big, round eyes. “But I can help you with one thing.”

“What is it?” Gunn turned to ask her.

“If you’ve any troubles or something worries you, you can always come to me.” After she finished the sentence, Ning swiftly turned another way. “I’ll go to the surgical room now.”

“What? That’s it?” Gunn looked at his friend with a confused expression. But when Ning left the room, he let out a long sigh. He looked out of the window. It’s not that he didn’t know what she was thinking. Because he knew it, that was why he played dumb in front of her until these days. After he went through trial-and-error of love for a long time, now, Gunn knew well what he wanted. He didn’t want to hurt Ning. There were so many good men who were worthier for her than him.

Gunn returned to the room where the family physicians' office took place, which was in Social Medicine Department on a first floor, not far from the emergency department. This afternoon, he had to present about the final stage patients to the caregivers . Gunn still needed to add some more information into the presentation. He sat on his chair and sent a heart sticker to Wasan via LINE message. He just rested for a few seconds when a guest visited him. Dr. Bunnakit approached him with two textbooks in his hands.

"I recommend these two books. They should be the easiest to learn. And this one written about Toxicology as you requested." Bunn towered over Gunn's desk, and sent him a smile. Gunn didn't deny that Bunn's smile was one of the most captivating smiles, as well as his well sculpted body. His height must be the same as Wasan's. He had curly, dark brown hair that made him outstanding.

Gunn thought that he was seeing another *one of the same kind*. He was quite positive.

"Thank you so much. When should I return them?" Gunn took the books and flipped through them.

"I'll be working here until June. You can return them any time before that."

"If you need to use them before then, you can tell me right away."

Bunn nodded. "If you'll excuse me, I've an urgent case with a lung cancer patient who died at home."

Gunn raised his gaze from the book and turned his head to look at Bunn. His gaze met with the eyes that stared steadily back at his face. This was the gaze of an intelligent man, Gunn thought before replying with his usual calm voice. "The case that the police brought to the emergency room? I've heard about it too. The family requested an autopsy?"

"It's a good thing they did," Bunn spoke with a stolid tone of voice. "I've to go."

Gunn watched Bunn leaving the room. A glass door let out creaking noise when he closed it behind him. He leaned back in his chair, intertwined his hands on his lap and let himself submerged in his thought.

"It's a good thing, huh..." Gunn murmured quietly with himself.



He hated this pink heart so much. He hated it even more when he saw who sent it. Wasan put his phone into his pocket without actually open the message to 'read' it. He wouldn't give the sticker-sender too much satisfaction. He lifted his head to look at a witness whom he called in to discuss further details. The witness who sat across from him was Mr. Piam Jindaluang. He was the person who reported that he saw someone broke in through the window of the house of the late lung cancer patient who later had tonic seizures^[21] and died at the hospital.

"Tell me what you saw," Wasan asked.

"It was dark, officer. I couldn't see things clearly. I just got home then. I spotted some silhouette when I was about to walk inside my house. I thought it's a ghost, so I rushed into my house, but when I got to a second floor and looked outside, I saw that silhouette trying to force open that house's window and climbed in—the window on the balcony, officer. I don't understand why it had to waste the time breaking in. Like it didn't know that it's easier to get in from the back of the house."

"Not a professional thief, then. Can you remember the appearance of the thief?"

Piam closed his eyes tightly, trying to think. "I couldn't see his face. It was so dark, but it's a man for sure. He wore a long sleeve black shirt and black pants. When I saw him, I was scared that he's going to break into my house next, so I quickly called the police."

"What time was it then?"

"Around 9 p.m."

Twenty minutes later, Wasan still hadn't got more useful information aside from the confirmation that there really was an intruder, which might be a man in black. Wasan thanked Piam and insisted that if anyone had additional information, he should be informed immediately.

Wasan pulled out his phone again. He just realized that it was noon already and he had nothing in his stomach.

'I'm starving.'

Wasan sent a message to Gunn. Seconds later, 'Read' appeared on the screen.

'Haven't eaten anything yet?'

'No. Works are still not done.'

'Quickly find something to eat. Or you'll be too thin. Your hug won't be warm.'

'Then don't.'

Are we some kind of teenagers? What nonsense are we talking about? Wasan thought, however, there was a smile on the corners of his lips.

He waited for Gunn's answer for a while, expecting a text or some digital stickers sending back in a few minutes, and he would get to work.

However, what he saw next wasn't a sticker or a text, but it was a call from one of his contact lists, 'Dr. Bunnakit, Forensic.'

Wasan hurriedly accepted the call, his heart was pounding hard. He had contacted Dr. Bunnakit just one time when there was an unnatural death last week. That was the first time he introduced himself to the forensic pathologist that he was an inspector who had just moved here. "Hello."

"Is this Inspector Wasan?" The end of the line spoke. "I'm Bunnakit, the forensic pathologist."

"Yes, Doc."

"The autopsy report of Mr. Chartchai isn't finished yet, but I wanted to report the preliminary results to you first."

Wasan knitted his eyebrows. "Go on."

"From the preliminary inspection, we haven't found the external cause of death. However, I just got a blood test back..." Bunnakit paused for a few seconds. "Benzodiazepine concentration level in his blood is extremely high with the absence of the medicine in his stomach."

Wasan was speechless as if he was cursed into stone. "Is it high enough to cause death?"

"It's enough to cause death. The deceased was injected the substance through his pulmonary arteries. This type of medicine is a

depressant drug. Receiving Benzodiazepine overdose leads to respiratory depression until organs are deprived of adequate oxygen supply.”

It's like Bunnakit's voice came from far away. Even though Wasan heard the answer with his ear, his mind refused to acknowledge its existence. What Bunnakit had told him opened a new door from the previous one where he once concluded that it was just a way of nature that he was unable to find answers to these strange incidents. The answer from Bunnakit explained everything, putting together scattered pieces of jigsaw puzzles into one related story.

That door is *murder*.

“Inspector?” Bunnakit called him when Wasan went silent for some time.

“Is this the cause of death?”

“This is definitely the cause of death.”

“The patient didn't take the pill himself?”

“There's no medicine in his stomach, sir.”

“Was it possible for someone to inject this substance into the deceased bloodstream?”

Wasan heard Bunnakit took a deep breath. “According to the current autopsy report, the answer is: it's possible.”

“The man who climbed into the deceased's house might be the one who did it, but why?” Wasan just realized that he was murmuring to himself with Dr. Bunnakit listening on the end of the line. “Thank you. I'll wait for other autopsy reports. If there's any further update or if I need your further assistance, I'll tell you.”

Wasan hung up the phone, throwing his arm on the desk with so many feelings rushed in like a flash flood. He closed his heavy eyelids, trying to work out his train of thought to figure out what he should do with this case. According to an unofficial autopsy result he had just heard, he could definitely conclude the cause of death. Wasan decided that after he come back from the court tomorrow, he would drop by to take the information from Tae at RPHPH to analyze the unusual statistical data of terminal patients' death.

His phone on the desk vibrated shortly. Gunn had texted him back, but he didn't even want to take a glance at the message.

Chapter Eight

The Pharmacist

A boy in school uniform sprinted towards the direction of the female medical ward. He ran into a nurse, but he didn't even have time to apologize. His face was drenched with sweat and his palms were sweaty. When he arrived at the destination, he rushed to bed number 5 where his mother was lying.

The boy's suddenly halted when he saw that bed number 5 was surrounded by medical students and nurses, and one doctor was standing at the head of the bed. Using a metal bar, the doctor was trying to pry a female patient's mouth open to insert an endotracheal tube. The patient on that bed struggled. There was a wheezing sound in her throat. The boy saw mucus mixed with blood ran from the corner of her mouth.

"Stop!" The boy, who had just arrived, shouted on the top of his lungs. All eyes of the people in that area were on him. His eyes were red while panting. "I said stop!"

The resident who was trying to insert the tube didn't even bother to look up. After he had successfully inserted it, he quickly snatched a steth on his shoulder to make sure that the tube got into a windpipe, not esophagus. "The patient started to have respiratory failure. I'd no choice."

The boy pushed himself through the crowd to stand in front of them to look at his mother who seemed unconscious at the moment. A scary amount of blood mixed with mucus appeared in the endotracheal tube and the nurse was sucking the mucus from it.

Every time the tube got into her windpipe, his mother's face revealed pain expression, and it was so painful for a son like him to watch.

"Mom..." The boy's vision blurred with tears. One of the nurses walked up to him and tried to pull him out. "She's been through enough...don't hurt her."

The nurse looked at him with sympathy. "The doctor was doing his best trying to help your mother. You go sit down outside first."

"There's no cure for her illness..." Tears streaked down on the boy's face. His eyes were darkened and empty. "Why does the doctor have to hurt her again?"

The young nurse was slightly taken aback before leading him to the waiting room in front of the ward. "Wait here."

When the young nurse turned back to her duty, the boy got to his feet, walking towards the door to the medical ward. He tried to find a spot where he could see his mother. The boy sobbed when he saw the doctor, who previously inserted the tube for his mother, climbed on the bed and pressed both of his hands on her chest with constant rhythm.

"Mom..." The boy in school uniform fell to his knees. He tried to hold on to a wall with one hand. "Doctor...Mom doesn't want to be hurt anymore. Doctor, stop doing this to her..." The bystanders' hearts were filled with pity by the boy's heart-wrenching sobs.

The memories when she was receiving a treatment from this hospital flashed back to the boy's mind. His poor mother was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in advanced stage where the cancer has spread to other organs, and she was suffering from chemotherapy's side effect. Her pretty face began to go gaunt. Her silky, long, black hair fell out, only small patches remained.

"If I get into a medical school, I'll find a way to treat you, Mom. You have to wait until I become a doctor!" The boy said while holding her hands in his.

His mother looked at him and smiled gently.

"You must not treat only me, darling. If you become a doctor, you must also treat others." Her extremely thin hands hold her son's firmly. "If it's possible, be the doctor who doesn't cure only people's illness, but also help them eliminate the suffering like I've been

enduring. Make the patients who were ill like me accept their illness, accept the way of nature. And bring those patients to peace towards the end of their lives, son.”

After a long period of trying to save her life, the mother of the boy died with endotracheal tube still in her throat. IV tubes linked to saline bottle, antibiotics, cardiac stimulants, and hospital monitor lines were rigging around her. The bed sheet was still damp from mucus and blood during the process of blood collection. On the nurse’s medical cart, there were full of medicine tubes used during the resuscitation. People moving around her bed to clean up the place. One of the nurses came up to remove the endotracheal tube and all IV lines from her body. Then, she pulled up the blanket to cover the deceased’s face.

If she was going to die regardless, why did her final moment had to end this way?

He used to picture himself sitting on the edge of his mother’s bed with her favorite rose bouquet in his hands. He was holding her hands, looking at the most beautiful woman in his life passed away peacefully, gracefully, and painlessly in a bright, clean, peaceful place.

So, the scene of her struggling before she died became a memory that he would never forget.



Gunn opened his eyes when an alarm from a phone rang. The sound was unfamiliar because it was originated from the phone of the person who was sleeping next to him. He looked at Wasan who was still sleeping, unmoved, as if he didn’t hear the alarm at all. Gunn reached for Wasan’s phone on a bedside table. Digital numbers on the screen indicated that it was 6 a.m. Gunn turned off the alarm, and turned back to the man who was still sleeping like a rock.

He understood Wasan’s fatigue after his restless double shifts. He could definitely relate to that. Back when he was a medical intern, he also went through these sleepless night shifts. It was reasonable that Wasan passed out as soon as he was sated.

“Hey” Gunn shook Wasan. “I want to let you go on sleeping if you didn’t tell me you have some tasks this morning.”

Wasan made a soft ‘um’ voice in his throat before his eyes, which always looked at Gunn stubbornly, gradually open. Gunn flashed his smile as a gesture for good morning before leaning down to kiss the older man’s forehead. Gunn could sense some sort of uneasiness or discomfort from Wasan since last night. Although the new day had already began, Gunn could still feel the tension lingered on.

“When will you stop frowning, Babe?” Gunn used his thumb to caress along the ridge of Wasan’s eyebrows and massaged the area between his knitting eyebrows.

“I’ve many stuffs to think about.” Wasan closed his eyes and turned to the opposite side. He lied still as if he was mentally dealing with something before pushing himself up. A white blanket fell from Wasan’s body, revealing the skin underneath down to his buttocks. Originally, based on Northerner genetics, Wasan’s skin was fair. However, he had been exposed to the sun on several occasion, his skin eventually turned a shade of tan. It was a very attractive skin tone for Gunn.

“Is there something you haven’t told me?” Gunn’s gaze followed Wasan, who got to his feet and took the towel.

“No.” Wasan answered curtly.

“It seemed like you have something on your mind.” Gunn began to use his Reassurance and Sympathy technique. “If you need any help, you can tell me.”

Wasan turned to face Gunn with a serious expression. He stared like he wanted to see through Gunn’s heart. “Not yet. If I need anything, I’ll tell you myself. No need to squeeze it out of me.”

Gunn raised up both of his hands, surrendered. An introvert will always be an introvert, despite the fact that they had been sleeping with each other every time they had a chance.

Right now, it was like each of them was standing on different sides of the mirror. The mirror was transparent that they could see one another but couldn’t really reach to touch each other.

“Alright, alright. No more questions.”

Wasan walked into the bathroom without saying a word. Gunn clasped his hands behind his head, while looking at the ceiling of the hotel where both of them chose to spend the night together. He actually wanted to bring Wasan over to his house, but there was some inconvenience that prevented him from doing just that. He needed to find a new way, perhaps he'd better find a decent rental house or buy a condominium and asked the man to move in with him.

Gunn was serious with this relationship. He had never committed to anyone as he would with Wasan. There was a rare chemistry between them. Not many people would make him feel so into them from the first moment they met. He saw cuteness hidden under the appearance of the stern and courageous officer. It was some sort of adorability that he could never feel if he hadn't grown closer to him. Gunn pictured his future with this man.

When a valuable thing was within his grasps, he wouldn't let it go easily. No matter what.



'Murder.'

"You worry too much, Wasan." The Deputy Superintendent Bert said when Wasan came to ask for an advice. "It could or couldn't relate to that. You shouldn't link this case to other dead people yet. You should focus on this case and finish the final report."

Yes, he might be over-suspicious, but this word kept popping up in his head every time he saw the statistical data of the terminal stage patients who had died in this past three years. Tae had sent the statistical numbers of the terminal patients in his responsible sub-district, along with the two nearby sub-districts to Wasan.

On the surface, it might look like natural death from the illness. However, the rapidly increasing numbers of the dead unusually contradicted the assessment of the treatment team in the last three years. Especially last year, the number was so extraordinary that it couldn't be ignored. Before this, no one suspected the cause of death enough to request for the autopsy. Only the latest case that an autopsy revealed something suspicious.

“Where should I begin?” Wasan rubbed his hair that was cut so short that his scalp could be seen while watching the desk full of case files. Perhaps, talking to the expert might help shed some light on the case, but that expert must not be Dr. Guntapat since not only that guy wouldn’t give the useful answer, he also liked to keep distracting him.

After sending a suspect on a drug charge to the forensic lab, Wasan asked for Dr. Bunnakit’s time to discuss further details on a significant amount of antidepressant found in the corpse’s blood, which was indicated as the cause of death. Bunnakit led Wasan to a physician lounge behind the emergency room.

“Is it really a murder, Dr. Bunnakit?”

Bunnakit pressed his lips in thin line, seemed deep in thought. “Based on the patient’s condition, it’s unlikely that he’d be able to inject that substance into blood vessels himself.”

“There’s a witness who saw someone breaking in the house at that time, but nothing was taken. Do you have any opinion on this?”

“If that person really was the offender, then he must be a health professional. It wasn’t just his injection skill that triggered my suspicion, but also his supplies of the medicine. Where could he get the medicine if he wasn’t a person working in this field?” Bunnakit glanced at Wasan’s face. “Inspector, you should ask the staff at the medical warehouse or at the Pharmacist Department if there was any unusual prescriptions or medicine relocation from the warehouse. Normally, the pharmacy room has a recording system of input and output, showing which doctors were the prescribers. If the stolen medicine really comes from this hospital, you might be able to find some clues.”

He must thank this forensic pathologist for that interesting point. “If there’re no unusual activities, then the medicine might come from somewhere else?”

“It’s possible, but the incident occurred in the responsible area of this hospital. Plus, this medicine is an intravenous drug that cannot be found in general pharmacy stores. It’s most likely that the drug was taken from here.

“Alright. Thank you very much, Doctor. If I’ve something else, I’ll need to consult with you again.” Wasan nodded his head slightly to

say goodbye.

“It's my pleasure, Inspector, I'll fully cooperate as long as I still work here.”

“So, you'll leave in a few months? It's such a shame that I've an opportunity to work with a clever forensic pathologist like you for a very short period” Wasan said thank you to Bunnakit again and excused himself from the area of the emergency room. He walked to ask the information desk for the pharmacist room's direction without any delays. He wanted to gather as much information as he could in this short period of time.

Wasan's police uniform made him stand out from the crowd. It was inevitable that he was the center of attention of both medical personnel and patients until he reached the destination.

Wasan approached a tall young man with fair skin in a short lab coat. 'Chanchai, PharmD' was embroidered in green thread on his lab coat. The man was busy putting labels in a little basket.

“Hello, may I ask you a question?”

The young pharmacist looked up at Wasan. His desolate eyes were wide open and frightened. The basket containing medicines in his hands fell to the ground. Medical plastic bags scattered on the floor.

Wasan furrowed his eyebrows at the pharmacist's reaction.

“Sorry! I'm sorry. I'm easily startled” He laughed dryly before bending down to collect fallen things.

Wasan sat down to help him pick up medical plastic bags into their previous container.

“Thank you.”

“I'm handling a case of a patient who died from Benzodiazepine overdose through blood vessels.” Wasan's sharp eyes stared at the pharmacist's face. “I wanted to ask the staff of the pharmacy room if there has been any unusual prescription on this drug.”

Pharmacist Chanchai shook his head. Wasan noticed huge beads of sweat on the man temples while they got on their feet. “Not that I know of. Some nurses might have taken more drugs than prescriptions because they accidentally dropped some medical ampoules or the doctors might prescribe wrong medications,

sometimes even repetitive prescription, but nothing seems unusual to me.”

“Sure. Thanks.” Wasan had a feeling that he should interrogate more people in order to be sure. Plus, this man’s reaction seemed very interesting. “By the way, where can I find the person who’s in charge of the medical warehouse?”

“Walk down the hallway on the left of this room, officer. Go straight to room 30 and ask for the chief of medical warehouse. His name is Somkiat.”

“Pharmacist Boze, have you done?” A staff called him through the glass window. The man turned to look at the caller and then turned back to Wasan nervously.

“Excuse me, I’ve to get back to work.” He bowed slightly to excuse himself and went to meet the staff who was waiting for his medicine.

Wasan considered the man who was called ‘Pharmacist Boze’ for a while. He precisely memorized his face, name, and position. Although the information he received might not reveal anything unusual, there was one thing that was peculiar. The pharmacist’s strange behavior when he saw him.

Wasan left the inpatient pharmacy and went towards the direction Pharmacist Boze told him. When he arrived at the area where patients were waiting for their check-ups, he met the person who made him swiftly turned back.

When Dr. Guntapat walked out of an examination room and saw someone so stood out from the crowd, he was surprised. With the way he dressed, Gunn could figure that he was Wasan from a hundred of miles away.

Wasan closed his eyes momentarily to calm his mind and turned to face Gunn who walked towards him.

“You miss me so much that you decided to come and see me here?”

That annoying smile made he clenched his fists tightly, and a thought came to his mind that people might not mind if the police officer punched the doctor in the middle of the hospital. “Get over yourself. I’m working. I’m not here to see you.” Wasan suddenly

thought of something. "Since you're here, please do something useful for once. Do you know the pharmacist named Boze?"

"Yes, I do." Gunn answered immediately.

"Are there any rumors about him?"

"There're no rumors about Pharmacist Boze. He and I aren't particularly close. We've visited the patients together only a few times. All I know is that Boze is quite shy. Mostly, he stays in the pharmacy room and rarely comes out for me to see him. He's quite good looking. I thought about asking him on a date once."

Gunn's words made Wasan felt like his heart was jerked out of his chest for a second, although he didn't have any reasons to feel that way. He looked at Gunn out of the corner of his eyes. "I knew it. Asking you is pointless as always."

"Don't you want to know why I gave up on the idea of asking him on a date?"

Wasan turned on his heels to continue his work. "No. Your answers would never help me."

"I gave up because now I'm going blind. I cannot see anyone but you."

Wasan suddenly halted. Gunn's eyes looked at his close-cropped hair. His broad back in a khaki uniform went stiff, unmoving for a second before he continued walking firmly without saying anything. The distance between the two men grew further and further until Wasan turned at the corner, and disappeared from Gunn's eye.



"The police already knew. What should I do? What should I do? What should I do...?" For half an hour, Boze was unable to do anything except for walking back and forth around his room in a hospital staff residence. He uttered the same phrase over and over like a lunatic. His hands clasped together tightly to stop his uncontrollable trembling. The sound of wind whistling from summer thunderstorms outside was nothing compared to the current storm inside his head. The striking lightning that flashed through the window made him even more deranged.

“Urgh!” He threw off a wooden box full of bulbs containing ready-for-use colorless liquid medicine. The box fell on the floor, followed by the bulbs like drops of rain. The tall man walked towards his bed and put his hands on his temples. His eyes widened and full of terror.

“What should I do?”

The only sound that could stop voices in his head was the thunder. Although it might be just temporary, but his trembling hands really stopped shaking. The man looked up slowly. His red eyes gradually took in a sight of the messy room as if it was hit by a storm. Books on the shelves were wiped down to the floor from his rampage. Document papers scattered in all directions.

He had to do this. Violence was the only thing that could extinguish his fear.

Those sharp eyes of that police officer had been haunting him in every second. He needed to find a way to get them disappear from his life before the owner of those eyes would take away his life.

“Kill...the police.” No one heard those words except for himself as they came out of his mouth at the same time as the thunder roared. His tears also trickled down at the same time as the sky above started to cry. The drops of the rain poured down loudly on the rooftop of hospital staff residence, drowning the young man’s voice completely.

Chapter Nine

The Ambush

The chief of the medical warehouse said that there was no unusual in the amount of dispensing medicine, and other staff also said the same thing.

Wasan stood with his hands behind his back. In his one hand was a paper with statistical numbers of terminal patients who passed away. He was looking at the rains falling on the windowpane behind his desk. Now, it was almost 8 p.m. Wasan was on a shift, so he still had a long night waiting for him. He decided to spend his time on unfinished case files during this quiet period. If he was lucky, he might have time to go back home to rest. But that time didn't occur very often on Wasan's shift.

'I'm going blind. I cannot see anyone but you.'

Gunn's voice made Wasan's heart fluttering that he had to close his eyes. Only thinking about it could make him act this way. There was no need to mention his reaction the moment he heard those words from Gunn's lips when he turned his back. Wasan had to walk away because his face was burning red and he involuntarily let out unpleasant expression.

He knew that what he felt was an infatuation. He was infatuated with this man. Head over heels. This was why he should keep a distance between them, or his heart would take sides during the investigation. Although, with his occupation and the specialty he possessed, Gunn could have involved in this incident. Deep down, Wasan prayed that Gunn would have nothing to do with this murder.

"Code 241, Location: Jazz Bar, Weapon: Knife, Roger."

His wandering deep thoughts were interrupted when he received a report of a brawl involving knife at the bar from a radio communication. Although the incident was already intercepted by the patrol officer, he still had to go there. However, going out during such summer thunderstorms in this time of night definitely wasn't pleasant for him and the forensic pathologist on duty.



“The patient took painkillers when he felt the pain more than three times a day and his pain scale was still high. In this situation, drug dosage adjustment is needed. As this patient received morphine in a total of 60 mg. per day. We need to adjust the dosage around the clock^[22] up to 30 mg. every 12 hours and give him 5 cc. of liquid morphine when he's in pain.” Gunn calculated morphine dosage for Ornanong, a middle-aged nurse who was working in Palliative Care Sector. The nurse nodded in understanding. “Well, my order is done. Are there other cases you want me to look?”

Ornanong looked at a file in her hands. “This is the last case, Doctor, because a case in female medical ward 2 just passed away last night.”

“Miss Malee, right?” Gunn watched the patient who was lying in front of him. “So, did she have a chance to see her youngest daughter before she passed away?”

“Yes, she did. In her last moment, her daughter flew back just in time.” The nurse smiled.

“She's so lucky. It's good that we've managed to contact her.” Gunn turned to nod at her. “You should get some rest. I need to do some errands at noon.”

“Of course, I'll buy some coffee to stock up in our new lair.”

“Ha ha. I like the word 'lair.' See you at OPD^[23] in the afternoon.”

Gunn's errand was to help his boyfriend investigate Pharmacist Boze, so that he wouldn't be scolded that he gave only useless information. From what Wasan told him, Pharmacist Boze was acting suspicious when he was questioned, so Wasan wanted to know if this

person was hiding something. Gunn walked down to the pharmacy room in the inpatient department where Pharmacist Boze worked.

“Pharmacist Boze suddenly called in sick.” A female pharmacist told Gunn from across a counter. “Do you have any urgent business, Doctor?”

“Oh...is that so?” Gunn backed away from the counter with a surprised expression on his face. “Nothing. I can come back later. Thank you.”

He was acting suspicious in front of Wasan and then he immediately called in sick?

Gunn stroked his chin with a thoughtful expression. Unfortunately, he knew this pharmacist too little to give any information. What he knew was that Pharmacist Boze had worked here for less than a year and visited the patients with him from time to time. He remembered that he once saw Pharmacist Boze walked out of the staff residence behind the hospital. If he investigated there, perhaps, he would find something.



Gunn narrowed his eyes to fight off the sunlight at noon, looking at the old and deteriorating two-story hospital staff residence before him. Doors and windows were tightly shut. There were a few cars parked at the front. Gunn couldn't tell whether one of them was Pharmacist Boze's or some other officer's at the hospital that was temporary parked in the area.

Gunn looked around before walking towards the front door of the residence silently. He knocked the door three times and paused, waiting for a response.

Silence.

He carefully looked left and right before exploring around the residence. He took in all the details of the doors and windows, all the way to the back of the residence.

While looking at a tightly shut backdoor, he pulled out his handkerchief from his pocket and covered his hand before touching

the doorknob. He tried to turn the knob left and right and found that it was locked.

“What are you hiding, Pharmacist Boze?” Gunn stood with his arms akimbo, looking up to the window on the second floor. He kept his handkerchief into his pocket while staring at the doorknob to memorize every detail for the last time before turning back.

Seeing two nursing assistants walked by the residence, he quickly and quietly hid behind a blind corner. When the two had already passed, he swiftly disappeared from that area.



When the bright sunlight in summer began to fade, a man in a long, black T-shirt, and black pants began to move. He wore a black wool hat and covered half of his face with a black mask. The man put on his leather gloves with his agile movement. To be certain that there is no one in the house, he stood observing till he was sure that the lights inside weren't turned on before walking towards the backdoor. He kneeled down, holding a small flashlight in his mouth and shine the light to a keyhole on the door. He brought out a wrench and a crowbar to pick the lock. Only one minute, he successfully broke the door's latch and easily entered the house.

The man looked around. The first room he entered was a kitchen. The next one was an empty, vast room with only one foldable table and one chair. Nothing seemed suspicious on downstairs. In the middle of the residence, there was a stairway leading to the second floor. He flashed the light upstairs and gradually walked up without making a noise. He found that there were two rooms on both sides of the stairway. The man in black chose to check out the room on the right, the one with a door left open, and he found most of belongings of the resident in this house inside.

What shocking was that the belongings were all over the place. A plastic chair was on its side, and some documents scattered on the floor. The man flashed the light on each item and looked for the clue before he found a wooden box with a lid lying on its side under a

desk. On the desk, there was a laptop. Then, the flashlight reflected on many reflective materials on the floor. He picked those things up.

They were pieces of small bulbs. Some of them were broken.

Suddenly, his eyes widen when he saw that the thing in his hand was Benzodiazepine, a depressant drug for injecting in blood vessels and it could be used to inject through muscle. There was also a potassium chloride, a drug that once injected into a body, would cause arrhythmia, a condition in which heartbeat was irregular until it stopped beating.

“What did you do, Pharmacist Boze?”

The man in black placed down the drug containing bulb where it used to be before holding the flashlight to continue exploring around. He searched through drawers and a bed. It's interesting that the drawers containing tons of empty syringes, needles for drawing the fluid and injection, a lubricant gel, and a box of condoms.

Already have a girlfriend then...

The man in black closed the last drawer he explored and walked back to the desk. He shined the flashlight on the desk thoroughly until he reached the laptop. He turned on the laptop which was on screen saver mode earlier. The laptop's owner didn't set up the password, so he could see the latest activity Pharmacist Boze had been doing.

A browser was left open. The words 'Wasan Kumboonrueng, police' appeared on the search tap.

The man in black rendered speechless as if he was struck by lightning while trying to process what he had just seen. He removed his mask, revealing Guntapat's handsome face. Now, a panic expression appeared on his face. He stumbled backward. “Wasan!”

Only one day after Wasan asked him about Pharmacist Boze, Wasan's name appeared on the search engine, and he found the evidence of stored drugs that could kill someone. It was definitely not a good sign.

Gunn rushed down the stairs, getting out of the residence from the backdoor and locked it. He took off his gloves and hat, running towards a car parking behind a surgery building. As soon as he got into the car, Gunn grabbed his phone on a passenger seat and hurriedly called Wasan.



“Gai and I will go to the department store. Do you want anything?” Thongkum shouted from the kitchen to ask Wasan who was printing some documents at his desk.

Wasan looked at the digital clock on his smartphone and just realized that it was already dark. The man whose head hadn't hit the pillow for 30 hours stretched out his tired body while answering his older brother with worn-out voice. “Anything will do.”

Thongkum poked his head out to look at his younger brother's state and sighed. “Hey. Go take a shower and get some sleep. You look like a dead man.”

“Not yet, but almost. I didn't sleep last night, and was soakin' wet from the rain. How lucky I didn't catch a cold.” Wasan flopped down on the desk. “Would you mind buying some grilled Thai sausage with sticky rice for me?”

“Hey, I'll go to the department store, not a market! If you want to eat Thai sausage with sticky rice, go to the market by yourself!”

“Just kidding. Can you buy me a Prickly Heat Cooling Powder^[24]?”

“Okay. A Prickly Heat Cooling Powder for Wasan. Gai, please help me remember that one. We'd better hurry.”

Wasan heard the front door closed, followed by a rumbling sound of pickup truck's engine. After they were gone, Wasan was working on his computer for another half an hour until he felt dizzy. Thongkum was right. He should stop working and get some rest before he really ended up dead.

He got to his feet and walked into the kitchen, opened the fridge, and pulled out a bottle of cold water to quench his thirst.

Today, he hadn't talk to Gunn at all. He told him that today he had to work all day and promised to call him in the evening. However, up until now, Gunn still hadn't called him, but Wasan didn't read much into it. He understood that they had their own business to attend to, and he was too tired to hold any long conversations with anyone.

In the middle of the silent night, a shadow figure slowly crept upon him. It was just a fraction of a second that Wasan had a glimpse of

the shadow from the corners of his eyes before his neck was locked from behind. He then felt a stinging pain around his left buttock as if he was injected by a needle.

Wasan shook himself out of his shock. As soon as he got his grip and was positive that the intruder didn't carry a gun, he raised his right hand, balling the intruder's sleeve above the elbow. Wasan caught the intruder's hand tightly, leaning backward and crashing his hips to that man's torso. He violently yanked the intruder's right arm while crouching down, sending the man tumbling onto the floor before him.

Wasan saw the man's appearance while he was scrambling on the floor. He was tall, wearing a blue T-shirt and black pants. He wore balaclava covered from his face to his neck. Wasan also noticed that there was a syringe with a hypodermic needle on the floor nearby.

A gun was what Wasan needed. It was in his desk's drawer in the next room. He swiftly turned, preparing to run. But huge hands suddenly grabbed his heels, made him lose his balance and fell. Both of them tried to get up, but unfortunately, the intruder was quicker to reposition. He launched to pin Wasan down onto the floor.

Wasan growled in his throat, punching his fist to the man's face and tried to yank a balaclava from that person's head.

"Who the fuck!" Wasan gritted his teeth while trying to resist the hands reaching for his neck. His strength seemed to falter. His vision became blurred. His head started to feel light as if he was floating in the air. With his last drop of strength, Wasan pushed away the hands that was strangling his throat and rammed his head to the intruder's, forcing the man to pause momentarily. He used this chance to flip himself over and straddled him. He raised his fist, preparing to knock him out.

"Ah!"

Wasan's punch made the man under the balaclava feel dizzy but he was still conscious. Wasan took this chance to flee to the desk in another room where he kept the gun. With the gun in his hands, he would regain his advantage. However, he didn't run as fast as he intended because the ground beneath his feet suddenly became unstable. Wasan's body swayed, and the intruder caught up with him.

He launched at Wasan and both of them were sent rolling on the ground.

Wasan was the one who was totally in disadvantage.

He was lying on his back. His eyes were so heavy as if he was about to knock out. His body was like in a state of paralysis. His consciousness flickered like a short circuit light bulb.

The last thing he saw was the man in black got to his feet, walked around Wasan's body, and dragged him somewhere.

While the last thing he heard was his phone vibrating on his desk.

Chapter Ten

The Suspect

“Wasan...I probably don’t have much time.”

Wasan looked up at the sky. His hand holding the phone against his ear was numb. He tried to hold back tears that welled in his eyes and blurred his vision. “Don’t say that. You wait until I go back. Next month I’ll move back home.”

“I don’t know if I could stay until then...” Raweewan spoke in a trembling voice. “I’m in so much pain right now, my darling.”

“What about a painkiller, Mom?”

“It started being ineffective.”

Wasan closed his eyes. A single drop of tear streaked down his cheek. “Please, have Thong tell the doctor to adjust the medicine for you.”

“Wasan...” She paused for a few seconds. “If I’m gone before you come back, you don’t have to be sad. If I’m gone, it means that it’s my own decision. Please respect my decision.”



The first thing Wasan heard when he came back to his sense was a constant beeping sound from a device above his head, followed by someone’s footsteps walking by. His eyelashes began to flutter before he slowly opened his eyes. Wasan felt that his body was so heavy. He was gradually regaining his consciousness. Wasan spent several seconds to determine where he was and how he ended up like this, but he couldn’t find the right answer. His right

hand could feel a warm touch that wrapped around it tightly. He looked down at the hand before looked up to see a man's cheerful face plastered with a big smile.

"Wasan!" Gunn hold Wasan's hand with both of his before lifting and kissing it on the back. He put Wasan's hand on his face as if he finally got his precious back. "Finally, you woke up! I worried sick about you."

Wasan closed his eyes and turned away from the light above the ceiling. His sense began to return to its full function. He could sense chaotic atmosphere around him with a constant sound of hospital stretchers' wheels. Wasan's left joint was connected to an IV line. Moreover, he felt that there was a nasal cannula under his nose. Wasan realized that something serious must have happened to him.

"Where am I?" Wasan turned to ask the man standing by his bed. He knew that this question seemed funny, but as a man who just regained his consciousness, this confusion was too overwhelming than he could find answers on his own.

"At the hospital. Right now, you're in the emergency room." Gunn stroked Wasan's head gently. "I'll call a duty doctor. Be right back."

Despite his lingering confusion, Wasan tried to regain his composure and recall the incident that brought him here. Perhaps, the more suitable question was, '*What was going on?*'.

Gunn walked back in with a female physician. She checked his vital signs before walking to the bedside. "How do you feel right now?"

"It's somewhat half dream half reality." Wasan eyed her. "What happened to me, Doctor?"

"Your brother came home and found you lying unconscious on the floor." Gunn was the one who answered. "You're found semi-conscious, sleepy, yet responsive, so your brother called the ambulance and brought you here. Can you remember what happened before that?"

"I..." Wasan shut his eyes tightly, massaging his tired eyes. "Someone broke into my house and tried to assault me. That's all I can remember."

Wasan heard Gunn let out a curse. He seemed utterly furious, while the female physician was surprised in response to Wasan's story. Watching Gunn's current reaction made Wasan feel strangely relieved, for he knew that there was someone ready to fight against this ordeal alongside him.

"That's exactly what I suspected. My boyfriend must've been drugged" Gunn glanced at Wasan. "Did the man who attacked you force you to take or inject you with something?"

Wait, who is your boyfriend? Wasan wanted to oppose him badly, but he didn't have enough strength.

The female physician looked at Gunn, startled, which Wasan wasn't surprised at all why she acted that way.

Wasan tried to recall the incident. He remembered that Thongkum and Gai went out to buy some groceries at the department store. He continued working for a while and went to the kitchen. Then, someone sneaked up on him and hooked his arm around his neck. He felt an instant stinging pain in his buttock. After that, Wasan's memory sunk into the sea of fog. The only thing left was numbing pain like someone slapped his left buttock.

"I think he injected some drug into my butt." Wasan's answer made both physicians' eyes widen, and then the two looked at each other.

"He must've been injected by IM method^[25], Gunn."

"I think so." Gunn pointed at the nurse station. "We'd better report the police. Tell them that Inspector Wasan was assaulted in his home and was still under observation at the emergency room."

"I'll call them, Gunn." The female physician quickly walked towards the nurse station to use the phone.

Gunn turned back to grab Wasan's hand, shamelessly holding it in his palms for a second time.

"Where is my brother?"

"Your brother and sister-in-law were waiting for you in front of the emergency room," Gunn replied. "It's fortunate that they came back before the intruder could do anything further to you. Your clothes were still tidy and there's no trace of injuries."

“You mentioned the clothes. Are you worried that I was going to be raped?”

“Of course, I am. You’re mine. If someone is going to force himself on you, I’ll kill him.”

“I belong to no one.”

Gunn smiled slightly before his face became serious. “Did you remember the intruder’s face?”

Wasan tried to squeeze out every drop of his remaining memory. “Aside from remembering that someone was choking me, and we probably got into a fight, I can’t remember anything after that.”

Gunn was deep in thoughts. “It must be the effect of the drug he gave you. I didn’t know if the intruder wanted to rob you or kill you. If it’s the latter, the intruder might want to make you unconscious before he’d murder you and try to cover it up. However, he failed because your brother got home first.”

Wasan noticed something in Gunn’s gaze. “Seems like you know something.”

Gunn looked at Wasan with his usual unreadable gaze. “I know what you know. You get some rest. No need to worry about other things. I’ll take care of everything.”

Even if Wasan was grateful that there was a man who determined to do so much for him, a sense of hesitation prevented him from being completely joyful. Gunn was always a man full of secrets. It made Wasan unable to reach this man completely. It was why he hadn’t opened up his heart a hundred percent. He was afraid that there would be an unexpected turn between them, and scared that the secret Gunn refused to reveal would hurt him the most.



The intruder must have been Pharmacist Boze. The drug Gunn saw when he broke into Boze’s residence must be the same as the one injected into Wasan. After he sent Wasan to admit in the male medical ward to be under observation, he walked back to the residence behind the hospital, and watched Pharmacist Boze’s residence that was still dark.

No matter how much Gunn wanted to tell the police that the suspect might be Pharmacist Boze, he couldn't. What he told them would definitely lead to the question of how Gunn obtained this information. The fact that he had broken into Pharmacist Boze's house and found the evidence without any authority wasn't such a good answer to give to the police.

If the intruder hadn't left any traces for the police, Gunn might have to come up with some plans to get the police's attention to Pharmacist Boze. Then, Wasan's case would be solved as well as the terminal patients' cases. He didn't know if the fact that the pharmacist possessed intravenous sedative had anything to do with the patients' deaths, but if the police aimed their target here, they might be able to find the answer.

The next morning, Gunn visited Wasan with an overly large bouquet of red roses. Wasan in a green patient uniform was shock with the gift that stole the spotlight from other presents in the male medical ward. The bouquet was placed on Wasan's bedside table. Even a male patient next to him turned to stare at it.

"Bring it out of here." Wasan whispered with a menacing tone. But Gunn simply ignored the request. He deliberately took Wasan's hand in his, but Wasan swiftly pulled his hand back and glanced at the nurses who started gossiping.

"How are you feeling? Still drowsy? You no longer need oxygen supplies; it means you're okay."

Wasan glared daggers at him. He acted like a tabby cat that was hissing and had an erected fur. "Why are you here? I'll call my brother to chase you away."

"I'm here to visit my boyfriend. Besides, I work here. No one can chase me out." Gunn spoke in a deadpan.

Wasan let out a long sigh and averted his gaze somewhere else helplessly. Without the wooden rail, he would have jumped out of bed and run away.

Gunn laughed softly after seeing Wasan's reaction. He was so adorable, contrasted to his tough appearance. "I did this because telling them that you're my boyfriend was the only way to explain why

I had called you during the incident. There weren't so many reasons to explain why I'd be able to call an officer in the middle of the night."

"Tell them we're close friends."

"A close friend wouldn't send heart icons to each other 24/7."

"Only you who sent those things."

"Even though you're feeling unwell, you still tirelessly argue with me." Gunn turned to look at a saline bottle. "Has more memory returned?"

"I also remembered that the guy was all in black and wore a balaclava. He was taller than me, might be even taller than you." Wasan took a glance at the flowers on the table. "You should go back to work. Leave this business to my colleagues. Today, almost every officer from my station would come to visit me as well as the officer responsible for this case."

"Sure. I hope you'll be out of the hospital today. So, I can take you to dinner as a consolation." Gunn smiled gently. "Don't forget to tell other officers that you're my boyfriend."

"I'm not your boyfriend. Go away" Despite the unpleasant words that poured from his mouth, Wasan's eyes were constantly fixed on the roses.

Gunn squeezed Wasan's arm lightly and walked out amid the eyes of the nurses in the ward. Today, he had to work at RPHPH. If there was no visiting case after that, he would clear his patient queues and came back to investigate Pharmacist Boze at the pharmacy room. If luck was on his side, and Wasan hit hard enough, there must be some bruises on Boze's body. Gunn was positive that a strong man like Wasan must have left some damages on his assailant.



"Pharmacist Boze's absent today, too. We couldn't contact him. Maybe he's still sick." The female pharmacist told Gunn when he came to ask for Pharmacist Boze again. He walked out of the pharmacy room full of doubt. The man has been missing for two days in a roll. How could he not be suspicious?

Gunn planned to break into Pharmacist Boze's residence again to see if there was more evidence he could find, or if there was any indication of where he might be.

"The police are all over the place." Three rescuers in yellow uniforms were talking at the hallway in front of the Psychiatric Department.

"Duh. I heard Inspector Wasan was hospitalized."

A local celebrity, huh, Wasan?

Gunn smiled slightly and walked by, ignoring them.

"No, they didn't gather in the ward. The police are all gathered at the residence behind the hospital, man."

Gunn halted.

"Like they're going to search the house."

"Whose house?"

"Someone said it's Pharmacist Boze's house."

Gunn took a deep breath and slowly let it out. A smile on his face grew wider. Sometimes, he was worrying for nothing. Wasan was one of the best police officers. No wonder he came to the right way. Wasan must have suspected Pharmacist Boze no less than he did. Gunn was glad that the police suspected Pharmacist Boze without needing so much of his help. When they found the evidence, not only Wasan's case would end, it might also lead to those final stage patients' unsolved cases.

Gunn only hoped that he didn't leave any traces when he broke into that house. Well, he was sure that he hadn't.



"The Grim Reaper in white. The Grim Reaper in white roaming in this hospital. There's the Grim Reaper in white."

The voice of the patient who kept repeating the same things over and over in the therapy room started to make the nurse who escorted him here feel uneasy. Even if they knew that Som, the patient who was sent by the police for rehabilitation, was diagnosed with a mental disorder caused by using narcotic drugs. The fact that this patient

was constantly talking nonsense about death sparked fears to people who overheard such thing.

“Som, stay still. You’ll fall off the chair!” A nurse tapped the patient’s back as he kept rocking back and forth like he was unable to control himself. She really hoped a psychiatrist would arrive soon.

“In this place, the Grim Reaper’s here,” Som looked at the nurse. “It took the sick’ lives.”

The nurse smiled patiently. “It’s a normal thing here. Patients died all the time.”

“I saw the Grim Reaper.” Som stopped rocking himself. His gaze absently wandered far away. “The Grim Reaper wore black at night but white during sunlight. I saw it. I saw it with my own eyes! The black Grim Reaper went into people’s houses, sucking out the souls of sick people and left. After that, I heard his voice, telling me to slaughter those animals as the Grim Reaper’s offerings.”

The nurse shook her head slightly at Som’s nonsense babbling. She’d been encountering with this kind of nonsense because the patients with psychiatric problems usually had hallucinations. If they couldn’t distinguish fantasy from reality, they would believe in what they saw. “People who wore white in this place were only doctors and nurses. All people here wanted to save the patients, Som, you don’t have to be afraid.”

“The Grim Reaper in white. The Grim Reaper in white.” Som repeated the same sentence when Dr. Kanokpon, a female psychiatrist, opened a door into this single therapy room.

“He still talks about the Grim Reaper, Pla?”

“Yes, Professor Pang.” The nurse replied. “I start to get goosebumps.”

“It’s okay. I’ll try to find the cause of his hallucination about this Grim Reaper to have more effective treatment. It might relate to an incident in his past. Thank you, Pla, for bringing him in.”

Pla nodded slightly. “Call me if you need anything.” And then walked out of the room, leaving the door slightly open.

“Not a hallucination. Grim Reaper in white. I did saw him!”

Dr. Kanokpon smiled gently. “I believe that you did see him because you aren’t well, Som. Unlike other people, there’s a chemical

imbalance in your brain. Shall we talk about the Grim Reaper today?"



“Seems like a lock at a backdoor was broken. Lieutenant Ball, we can go in this way.” The police officer grabbed the doorknob at the backdoor which had not been locked from the inside, allowing them to easily entered the residence.

“Everyone, this way!” Lieutenant Ball called his colleagues to take a detour to the back of the hospital staff residence belonged to Mr. Chanchai or Pharmacist Boze. This search was based on a warrant from the court.

Inspector Wasan, who was a victim, reported that Pharmacist Boze was a suspect in the assault. However, the police couldn't contact the pharmacist, and he coincidentally took continuous sick leave, which seemed so suspicious. Searching the house would give them additional evidences, such as the drug used during the assault. The officers asked two people to be witnesses in this search. They were Dr. Somsak, the hospital director, and Mrs. Pranee, a registered nurse.

“Is the backdoor broken?” Dr. Somsak was surprised before he quickly followed the police. Two police officers and the witnesses took a detour to the backdoor which could be opened with ease. Dr. Somsak shook his head, watching the whole incident with disbelief before turning to look at Pranee. “I've been here for 20 years. This is the first time the police search through the staff residence.”

“It's necessary, Director. If they find nothing, Pharmacist Boze might not be the suspect.”

“But Inspector Wasan clearly identified Pharmacist Boze and he's absent. We're unable to contact him at all. I think it truly is fishy.”

“Director, if it really is Pharmacist Boze, I don't know why on earth he would do such a thing, attacking the police like that.”

Somsak let out his breath. “We wouldn't know until he tells us himself.”

Two police officers had entered the house. Somsak and Pranee hesitated for a moment before deciding to follow them. Only

milliseconds that Somsak stepped inside the house, he heard the police officers who had led their way cursed out loud.

“Fuck!”

Somsak widened his eyes in alarm. He was uncertain whether he should go inside or retreat for now.

Another police officer ran past him to the room in the middle of the house, near the kitchen where the noises came from. The police promptly reported what they'd found through radio communication.

Somsak carefully walked in to see what was happening, and then, the scene before him made his blood ran cold.

In the middle of the house where all the doors and windows were tightly shut that no light could get through, a body was found dangling from the side of the stairway. Underneath the body's feet was a plastic chair lying on its side.

Somsak tried to gather his courage to look up at the face of this dangling body.

The face was ash white, lips were deep green, tongue sticking out, but there was still an outline that could determine the identity of this person.

“Oh...Oh...” Pranee, who followed him in, looked like she was going to be sick when she saw a grotesque scene before her. Dr. Somsak swiftly turned to hold her and rushed out of the crime scene.

Chapter Eleven

Staging Murder

Dr. Bunnakit gracefully put on his gloves. He raised his head to look at the body with his daring and intelligent gaze, seeming like he had no fear. His dark, brown eyes scanned and memorized every detail into his brain, while analyzing relevant information the police needed.

Who was the deceased?

It was obvious—from people who know the deceased, an ID card, an employee card, and his dwelling—that this man was Chanchai Maneerat, PharmD. He was the one who couldn't have been contacted since yesterday and was the one whom Inspector Wasan suspected of attacking him in his home.

Where did he die?

Bunnakit looked for any traces of the body's relocation since there were no visible stains of blood or any secretions. Plus, the body posture appeared that his arms and legs were stretched vertically by the gravity which could be assumed that he died on that spot or he had been hanged before his corpse went into rigor mortis.

When did he die?

Bunnakit nodded at Anun, signaling the man to help him with the corpse while he moved the biggest joint in the human body: the hip joint. It had already gone stiff. The pathologist kneeled, pressing his hands on the corpse's insteps skin, which appeared crimson red from the blood falls due to gravity. This man had been dead for 6-8 hours, which was about 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. that morning.

What was the cause of death?

By the looks of it, Mr. Chanchai died by hanging. The next thing Bunnakit needed to figure out was that he died before *or* after he was hanged. If he had died before he was dangling like that, it would be a totally different case. However, this question could be answered after they performed an autopsy to find any traces of physical injuries or poisoning at the Forensic Department.

A manner of death....

Bunnakit took a deep breath when he reached this step. He dragged a chair—the one that wasn't lying on the floor—and stepped on it to take a better look at a knot and ligature marks on Chanchai's neck. What he saw almost made him stop breathing. This wasn't the first time he found a case like this. Bunnakit could see ligature marks made by another material under the rope that was used to hang him. This strangulation left a clear, visible mark, the one that could depict its violence.

Even clearer than the previous case he had experienced.

"Dep. Supt. Bert, I found a suicide note upstairs." Everyone looked up, following the voice of the officer who had investigated on the second floor. "It was typed in a computer on his desk."

The Deputy Superintendent, who was also at the crime scene, looked at Bunnakit. "I'll go upstairs to take a look, Dr. Bunn. Call me if you need me."

Bunnakit nodded and stepped down from the chair. Taking his gloves off his hands, he turned to look at the officer who was waiting for his report on the postmortem. "I couldn't determine the cause of death right now. I'd like to request an autopsy."

The police officer nodded. "Still can't conclude that it's a suicide, right?"

From his previous experience, Bunnakit learned that he shouldn't alert other people with his speculations, because he would never know whether there was a murderer in this room. "The manner of death indicates suicide, but I want to perform an autopsy to confirm it."

Dep. Supt. Bert walked down the stairs with a picture on his phone. He then approached Bunnakit and read the messages he took from the computer screen to him. "I couldn't live with this guilt

anymore. What I did was unforgivable. It'd be better if I just ended my life. I thought I was a suffer reliever of those dying patients, but in the end, the one who suffers is me. Forgive me for every soul I have taken away from your loved ones. I apologize to Inspector Wasan whom I've tried to assault because of my stupidity, and I apologize to Dr. Guntapat that I couldn't put what you've taught into practice the way you wanted...Boze." Bert looked up at Bunnakit. "Two names appeared on this message. I'm not skeptical about Wasan, but who is this Dr. Guntapat?"

Bunnakit knew awfully well who this Guntapat was, but what made him momentarily stunned was the message the deceased left behind.

How did the name of the family physician appear on this note, and what exactly did Guntapat teach Pharmacist Boze?

"He's a family physician who started working here at roughly the same time as me." Bunnakit quickly said what was on his mind. "But if Pharmacist Boze wasn't the one who typed this message, then it would lose the meaning, right?"

Bert frowned. "What do you mean?"

Bunnakit tried to suppress what he wanted to say the most. He only meant that Pharmacist Boze might not be alive to write that suicide note on his own, so the person who typed the message could make up any false information or frame anybody. "Nothing, sir. I'll perform an autopsy at the lab again to confirm the cause of death."

"You're not as adventurous as you used to be, Doc." Bert tapped on Bunnakit's shoulder. "Then, I'll go outside to tell the reporters that it might be the suicide from the guilt, and that we've to wait for further postmortem report."

"Of course." Bunnakit's gaze followed Bert until he was out of sight. He then stepped aside, allowing Anun to take the pictures of the corpse more conveniently.

An idea sparked in Bunnakit's mind. He liked to play games with himself. If there was a murder case, he liked to secretly guess who the murderer was. All this time, his prediction was precise until Janejira's murder case.

Bunnakit closed his eyes, trying to suppress one name that kept resurfacing on his mind.

He wouldn't jump to any conclusion.
Never again.

Let the police do their investigation. His only duty was to perform the autopsy.



Wasan's expression didn't look so good when he heard what had happened from a junior police officer. He hurriedly pushed himself up, looking for the closest nurse and raised his hand to call her. "Excuse me."

Narm walked up to him. "Is there anything I can help?"

"The doctor said I could go home now. When can I leave? There is a case in the hospital. I need to go there."

"You can change your clothes and wait for the final hospital discharge. Right now, we're almost done with your hospital discharge and your appointment receipt."

"Then, please take the appointment receipt for me. I need to hurry." Wasan told the police officers in uniforms before asking them to lower the bed rail, so he could get out of it. He then walked towards a shared toilet in the medical ward, and changed his clothes from the light green patient garb to his T-shirt and khaki pants he had worn before he got into the hospital. When he walked out of the toilet, he met a tall man in a short lab coat. Wasan went silent for a moment like he fell into a trance.

"You've heard the news?" Gunn asked quietly.

"I'm going to see the crime scene."

"They already brought down the body. It's being sent to the Forensic Department." Gunn watched Wasan with eyes full of concern. "Are you sure you're okay now?"

"I'm fine." Wasan walked past Gunn and headed towards one of the nurses. "You can leave the receipt and the flowers to that officer. I must go to work now." After finishing talking, he turned on his heels and rushed towards the door of the medical ward.

Gunn increased his speed to catch up with him before Wasan could ride an elevator down.

“Why did you tell your colleague that Pharmacist Boze was the suspect?” Gunn asked while the two of them were in the elevator together.

“Because when I questioned him about the missing drugs, his reaction was so suspicious. It’s my mistake to ask him that.” Wasan massaged his knitted eyebrows. “Don’t you have work to do?”

“I’ve a patient to visit at 1.30 p.m. I knew that you’re going to be discharged today, so I decided to drop by.” Gunn placed his hand on Wasan’s cheek, stroking his thumb over the soft skin. “I was so worried about you. Don’t do anything reckless again, understood?”

Gunn’s touch gave a sensation of faint electric current, sending a thrill and pleasure to him. Not only on the area Gunn’s hands caressed, but it also reached deep inside his chest.

In the quiet elevator, there were only them guys. Wasan’s heartbeat was pounding that he heard it clearly in his ears. Gunn’s hand not only seized his cheek, but also his heart, squeezing it tightly that he couldn’t run away.

Wasan considered this feeling as an ‘infatuation’, in which he couldn’t decide if it was beautiful or terrifying.

He closed his eyes, leaning into that hand. Gunn lowered his hands to Wasan’s shoulders, pushed him against the elevator, causing a loud thud, and bent down to kiss Wasan on the lips. He bit those lips while locking his guy in his arms, then placed a kiss on his neck. One of Gunn’s hands moved down to squeeze Wasan’s firm ass.

The numb pain on the spot where the intruder had injected the drug woke Wasan up from the trance.

He quickly pushed Gunn away about the same time the elevator arrived on the ground floor. Both of them returned to stand in the middle while adjusting their slightly messy clothes.

“What the heck?” Wasan grumbled in a low voice and rushed out of the elevator. Pretended like nothing had happened.

“No worries. This elevator doesn’t have any security cameras.”

“Then tell them to install some,” Wasan growled. He quickly stepped away from Gunn.

“If they do, then we couldn’t do that anymore.”

“You, just shut up!”

“Where are you going?”

“To the crime scene, the residence behind the hospital. Unlike you, I’ve work to do. I can’t follow anyone around.”

“And do you know the way?” Wasan suddenly halted. Gunn chuckled and took this chance to lead the way. “Follow me.”

Wasan followed Gunn to the front of Pharmacist Boze’s residence. There were police cars and three police officers standing with a group of people who should be local reporters. When Wasan approached, one of the officers walked straight to him. “How are you now, inspector?”

“I’m fine.” Wasan anxiously looked into the residence.

“They’ve already moved the body to the forensic lab. But the crime scene investigators are still gathering fingerprints in there.” The Senior Sergeant Major rushed to interrupt Wasan who was very determined to go in there. “Inspector, Superintendent Bert said that if you’re out of the hospital, he wanted to see you at once.”

Wasan stared at him for a second before giving up the idea of going into the crime scene. “Where is he?”

“At the police station. Please get in the car, Inspector, I’ll take you there.” He pointed to a white-red pickup truck parking nearby.

Wasan nodded, turning to look at Gunn who refused to go anywhere. “Thank you for bringing me here. I’d better get back to work.”

The way the Senior Sergeant Major looked at both of them was as if he knew some hidden secrets. Wasan tried not to overthink that his relationship with Gunn was known. By now, the cellphone on his desk during the incident must have been thoroughly examined by his peers. Wasan only hoped that everyone would see it as a private matter that didn’t interfere with his work.



But he was so wrong.

A case file of a terminal cancer patient, who was injected with antidepressant and resulted in his death, was placed on a desk

between Pol.Gen. Thianchai, the Superintendent of this police station, and Wasan, who was standing with his hands behind his back. Wasan looked at that file with his blank eyes. He knew what would happen even if the Superintendent didn't said a word.

"Dr. Guntapat's name appeared on the pharmacist's suicide note. Please summon him for interrogation today"

Wasan closed his eyes, trying to contain emotions that rolled inside him. "Then I'll issue a subpoena..."

"You know that you should do something else, other than issuing the subpoena, Inspector Wasan." Thianchai leaned into his chair, glaring at Wasan with his intense gaze.

Wasan clenched his fists and pressed his lips together. He wanted to resist, but in the end, he dejectedly surrendered. "I...will recuse myself from this case, sir."

Seeing this, the middle-aged superintendent nodded. "Dep. Supt. Bert will take over the case. We need your cooperation, if you know something else about this person, tell Dep. Supt. Bert everything. But if you cover up for him, you and your 'partner' might be charged with conspiracy."

Wasan took a deep breath to ease the feeling of having a leather booth kicked on his chest. A remark full of disdain, a feeling of disgust and full discrimination were obvious in his voice and facial expression. Pol.Gen. Tianchai got out of his chair, walking firmly out of the room, leaving Wasan standing alone, with his hands behind his back, in that silent room.



"I've given lectures on the principle of palliative care for everyone in this hospital," Dr. Guntapat told the officer in front of him firmly. "Not just once, but at least five times in this hospital that I've given such lectures on a good death. Not to mention countless invitation to be a guest speaker outside the hospital. If someone wanted to appropriate my name, I wouldn't be surprised."

“You mean that you aren’t complicit in the pharmacist’s abuse on your concept?”

“I’m totally not complicit in his activity, and what I’ve been lecturing isn’t even my idea. It’s a universal principle that specialists like me used widely around the world. It’s been mentioned in several international textbooks. I just studied those texts and cited documents from various sources for my lecture, that’s all. It wasn’t my own idea.” Guntapat clasped his hands on the desk, looking at his surroundings with a frightened expression. “I’m shocked my name appeared on that note. I insist that Pharmacist Boze and I rarely know each other. We visit the patients together from time to time, but we barely talked.”

Deputy Superintendent Bert stared at Guntapat’s handsome face. He tried to catch any dodgy sign, but after their conversation, he hadn’t found anything suspicious. “Has Pharmacist Boze ever attended your lecture?”

“Yes, he has. He’s attended my lecture and he’s one of the pharmacists who coordinated with visiting teams.”

“What do you think Pharmacist Boze meant in the suicide note, sayin’ that *he couldn’t put what you have taught into practice the way you wanted?*”

“I guess that,” Gunn answered patiently. “He might have performed euthanasia.”

Bert raised his eyebrows. “You mean a practice that a doctor kills a patient?”

“It literally means a ‘good death’, but in this context, it means the practice that the patients choose to end their lives with the assistance of people with medical knowledge. I’ve given lectures about this matter a couple of times, using general knowledge combined with religious and law analysis from around the world. Everything I’ve said was a ‘fact’.” Guntapat seemed thoughtful. “He might have tried to abuse what I lectured and failed. Those patients might not have ‘good deaths’ in accordance with the theory that I’ve taught, so he might want to say sorry to me.”

“Have you ever provided an example in what the pharmacist has done?”

Guntapat smiled lightly, showing his sincerity. “Absolutely not.”

“What have you been doing from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. this morning?”

“I was sleeping in my house.” Guntapat leaned into his chair with an awkward face. “I bought a house in a housing estate. If you wanted to check the period I went in and out of my house, security cameras in front of my housing estate should’ve recorded everything. Last night, after I sent Inspector Wasan admitted into the hospital ward at 1 a.m., I arrived home half an hour later, and came out to work at 7 a.m.”

Bert had to release Guntapat because he didn’t have enough proof to recommend a charge on the man. After a long period of investigation, Guntapat didn’t reveal any unusual reaction. For his lack of circumstantial evidence, Bert would send his men to retrieve the recorded footage from the security cameras in front of Guntapat’s housing estate.

Aside from that, Bert just received the information from a brief autopsy result when he called upon the forensic pathologist. It appeared that there were ligature marks on his neck which had occurred before he was hanged for a cover-up. After combining all these information, Bert came to a conclusion that Boze might not type the suicide note himself, and if Dr. Guntapat was the murderer, he wouldn’t be foolish enough to type his name on the note.

“Lieutenant Kong.” Bert looked out the window, to the physician who was walking to the parking lot in front of the police station. He spoke to a man in a long sleeve, black leather shirt with jeans standing behind him. “Get to know the doctor at once, and watch him like a hawk.”

“Keeping an eye on one doctor should be easier than a sting operation.” Kong put his hands in his pocket casually. “I’ll send my minions to follow him.”

“Do not disappoint me. You’ve eyes like a pineapple.^[26]”

“A pineapple only has a few tens of eyes, but I’ve more than that.” The detective touched his cropped-short hair. “By the way, is that doctor a gay partner of our Inspector?”

“Correct.”

Kong seemed excited. “Aha, interesting.”

“Find only useful information. No private business nonsense unless you think Wasan conspires with him. In that case, report it to me at once.”

“Yes, sir.” The man, who didn’t look like a cop at all, noted. He put on his black cap before disappearing quietly from the room.

Kong was an agile detective who could be on intimate terms with everyone and always knew his way around. He was like an unseen shadow, monitoring and collecting useful information from various sources, so he was known as ‘the pineapple-eyed detective’. Bert didn’t know who exactly were these Lieutenant Kong’s ‘minions’, but he wouldn’t bother asking. He only wanted sufficient evidences to charge the suspect. That was all that make him so satisfied.

Chapter Twelve

Where We Stand in This Relationship

Guntapat was looking for a guest speaker to deliver the knowledge of depression to people in the community under his care. The best choice would be Dr. Kanokpon or ‘Dr. Pang’ from the Psychiatric Department.

Gunn opened the door and smiled at a nurse sitting in the office of the inpatient department. “Is Dr. Kanokpon here?”

“Yes, she’s just finished her therapy session. She’ll be out in any minutes, Dr. Gunn.” The young nurse swiftly got to her feet. “I’ll get her for you.”

“Thanks a lot.” Gunn didn’t have to wait long before he saw a female physician wearing a light, peach chiffon blouse opening the glass door into the nurse’s office. Gunn greeted her humbly as she was older than him. “Pang, it’s been quite a while.”

“Gunn, as soon as I see your face, I just know you must’ve something in store for me.” Dr. Pang laughed. “Where do you want me to be this time?”

“I want you to give a lecture to the VHV^[27] at the municipality’s auditorium. We provide free lunch!”

Pang gave him thumbs up. “Anything for you, Gunn. If you’re less handsome, I might hesitate a little.”

Gunn and the nurse standing nearby laughed. Dr. Pang always had a good sense of humor. She was a psychiatrist who took very good care of her mind, and she always shared her generous mind with others. “Are you busy lately, Pang...”

“Ahhhhh!”

Someone's scream drew Gunn's attention. What he saw through the glass between the nurse's office and the ward was an incredibly thin body of a male patient falling to the floor on his bottom. A male nurse was trying to support the patient up but to no avail. That patient looked at Gunn with his eyes nearly popped out of his head. He seemed terrified out of his life. Scrambling backward, his lips and hands were shaking.

"Grim Reaper." He pointed his finger at Gunn's direction. "The Grim Reaper!"

After the patient cried out, the eyes of every person in that room were on Gunn. But he simply looked at the patient. His face was as calm as the windless sea.

Two other nurses ran out to hold down the patient who seemed to be even more out of control. Dr. Pang let out a loud sigh.

"We talked casually just minutes ago." Pang patted Gunn on his shoulder. "I'll take a look at him. You just send me the schedule in LINE chat. I'll be there."

"Thank you so much, Pang." Gunn smiled at her. "I hope peace return to your ward soon."

"Only this case is rather difficult." Pang nodded to excuse herself.

Gunn turned on his heels and walked towards the exit. The patient's howling was constantly echoed through the ward. He kept crying, screaming and repeatedly shouting the word, "The Grim Reaper! The Grim Reaper!" No one explained what had happened to this patient to Gunn, which was understandable since it was the department's standard patient confidentiality. Gunn hoped the patient would recover from his condition soon because being pointed at and called as 'the Grim Reaper' so abruptly, left him quite startled.



A man in white T-shirt and police pants was standing on a pathway by a river. His gaze wandered to the sky above, which was painted with the golden light of the setting sun. In the next few minutes, the night would arrive. His mind kept dwelling on

his terminal patient's case that he put his effort into finding tons of evidence, but was taken away before his own eyes.

It might be a good thing since he still had a massive, unfinished case files which he had to finish soon. Nevertheless, he was indignant at the thought of it. Wasan threw a stone into the river, watching ripples gradually disappeared. He had to keep his head cool and regain his formidableness, acting like water under the bridge.

Suddenly, there was a sound of footsteps approaching behind Wasan, making him turn back. A man in a dark blue shirt stared right back at him with eyes as warm as the setting sun. Wasan took a few steps back and leaned on the fence. He looked at the man who just came and took a spot next to him to watch the sun.

"We both are sinners in this gorgeous world," Wasan turned to face the wind coming from another direction. "it's a sin that defines what is right and wrong, it's unchangeable."

"I didn't know you're a poet."

"I'm not a poet. I just tried to say, 'What's wrong with being gay, you mother fucker?' in an eloquent way."

Gunn chuckled. "Seems like it conveys an entirely different meaning from what you've previously said."

Wasan shook his head. "Don't mind me. Right now, it's like my brain has been hammered to pieces. I don't think you would find any coherence from what I said." Wasan was quiet for a moment. "Gunn, can I ask you something?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you just an unlucky bystander, or a murderer in disguise?" Wasan's sharp eyes took a glance at Gunn's face.

Gunn stared defiantly right back at the person who had questioned him. "I'm the unlucky bystander."

"I wish I could trust you 100%. I want to believe every single word you said, but as a cop, I couldn't do that until the mystery is unraveled. Not until I could prove that you truly have nothing to do with it." Wasan stared at the handsome face before him. "I call you out here to talk. About where we are standing in this relationship."

"Please, allow me to speak first." Gunn immediately replied. "I don't know where we are if you asked me because it also depends on

your answer. But what I want is to spend the rest of my life with you. I want to get up in the morning with you. Sleep next to you. Make love to you. Hold you in my arms. Take good care of you. And I want to have you in every important occasion in my life, to be my support, to be...the most important person for me.”

Wasan fell silent for a while before casting his eyes downward. “You know I can’t say that.”

“I understand. As long as this mess hasn’t unraveled, you wouldn’t trust me.” Gunn reached for Wasan’s hand on the fence. “Tell me what you want.”

“I...” Wasan pulled his hand and turned his entire body to face Gunn. “I want to do the right thing, as a police officer. If you’re innocent, I’ll be yours. But if you’re the murderer...” The wind blew, casted the leaves to rustle. Dry leaves during dry season fell on the ground between them. “I’ll be the one who cuffs your hands, throws you in the jail, and watches you get a death penalty.”

Gunn didn’t look perturbed in the slightest. He was still calm and fearless. The corners of his lips slowly pulled up into a smile, making his face as warm as the sun. “If so, you’ll definitely be mine.”

“And this is where we stand until everything is solved. We should stop contacting each other for now.” Wasan looked up when he finished his sentence, trying to block this overwhelming emotion in his chest. He quickly walked away, in need of being far away from the man he had left behind. He didn’t want to hear Gunn’s voice or see his face longer than this. He wanted Gunn to hug him, kiss him, and touch him.

He was falling in love. Hard. So hard that his eyes blinded by it. So hard that he couldn’t see what was right.

So, he should stop before it’s too late.

Before his heart fell into this deep infatuation pit and would never be able to climb out of it.



“I must say I’ve found many bruises on your body, Inspector.”
Bunnakit wrote down the record of injuries on the chart. At the

moment, they were in a small room that was divided within the emergency room to serve as Dr. Bunnakit's examination room for the forensic patients. Every mysterious case was not a stranger to this tiny room because it was where Dr. Bunnakit performed physical examinations and recorded what he found to help solve a criminal case. "There're scratches, probably with nails, on your chin and your neck."

"It'd be awesome if I could remember the whole thing." Wasan put on his T-shirt after the examination was done. "How was the autopsy result of Pharmacist Boze, Doctor?"

"It's not as clear as we saw." Bunn put the chart down on his desk, looking at the door of the examination room. "The hanging and the suicide note were just a perfect staging."

Wasan's eyes widened. "What do you mean?"

"You'd better wait for the autopsy's official report, Inspector Wasan," He pulled off his gloves. "And you should pick up that call."

Bunnakit was talking about a phone that vibrated non-stop in Wasan's pocket.

Wasan heaved a sigh, pulling it out and hanging up the call dismissively. "I'll find a way to block that number. I'm sorry I distracted you."

"If you really wanted to block that number, you'd have done it a long time ago." Bunnakit's comment stunned Wasan because it was the truth. "Please wait for a medical certificate for a moment, Inspector." Bunnakit sat down and took out a medical certificate form from the desk's drawer. Wasan watched the man in front of him before blurting out a question.

"What do you know about Dr. Guntapat?"

Bunnakit halt his hand. He leaned into his chair before turning to look at Wasan with a thoughtful expression. "Dr. Gunn was a family physician. His distinctive role was to provide palliative care to the untreatable patients who were sort of waiting for their deaths. But during the waiting, Dr. Gunn would do his best to help ease their symptoms as well as their mental health."

"What is he like?"

Bunnakit could sense Wasan's changing tone. Wasan shouldn't be the emotional sensitive type of person, but right now, he seemed like the sand dune about to be collapsed any moment. "A mysterious man. These words describe him best since we've known each other three years ago. I barely know anything about him. I didn't even know what he was like. He was a person whom you can't tell what he was thinking." His intelligent eyes stared at Wasan's face. "But you should know him better than I do."

"Well, the story is disseminated everywhere. About him and me." Wasan heaved a sigh.

"Don't worry. I'm not judging you. Now, I also have a complicated relationship with a man." Bunn said it out so that Wasan would be more comfortable, which he did. Despite sharing the same occupation, he felt that Bunnakit was ten times more approachable than Guntapat. "But overall, Dr. Gunn is a good man. He's praised by all. He contributed many works for the hospital and even got an Outstanding Physician Award recently. Director Somsak really likes him."

The phone rang again and Wasan quickly pulled it out to hang up for how many times he had lost count. "Are there any unusual rumors about him?"

"It might be easy if he showed some suspicious behavior. Unfortunately, I got none. The strangest thing I heard about Dr. Gunn was that his name appeared on Pharmacist Boze's suicide note and that he's dating you."

"I'm not..." Wasan felt that he had had enough of trying to refuse. "If you know any strange rumors about him, please let me know."

"Of course." Bunnakit signed his name on the bottom right section of a paper. "It's done. There were no serious external injuries, but Benzodiazepine was found in your blood on a level that could result in drowsiness."

"Thank you." Wasan received his medical certificate and got to his feet. "I've got to get back to work, Dr. Bunn."



Guntapat dropped his hand that was holding his phone on a table. His brows tightly knitted. He let out his breath, absently looking out the examination room, which now only a few patients remained, waiting for their medicine. Tae walked towards him, dragging a chair to sit across from Gunn.

“I’ve never seen you this upset.” Tae turned to an entrance at the back. “Lek! Could you please give Doc a glass of water!”

Gunn closed his eyes momentarily to collect himself before opening them with a smile everyone familiar with. “I’ve got a lot of work lately, Tae.”

“Must be work at the hospital. I’ve heard your Palliative Project was going well that many sectors request for study visits.”

“That’s because Professor Somsak gives me his support. Fortunately, he sees the importance of my work.” Gunn looked over his phone which was responsible for someone’s miscalls that escalated to double digits. “I’ve a meeting this afternoon. If a case comes in, you can call me any minutes.”

“Okay, Doc.” Tae watched Gunn collecting his belongings into the satchel and hurriedly walking out, forgetting an expensive golden fountain pen and his steth on the table. “Dr. Gunn, wait! You forget these again.”

Gunn turned around, shaking his head, irritated with himself. He accepted the things from Tae. “My brain is getting rusty.”

“Perhaps the problem isn’t that you’re forgetful like an old man, but you’re losing focus.” Tae patted Gunn on his shoulder. “Please try to get some rest.”

“Thank you.” Gunn offered his smile before hurried out of the examination room of RPHPH, where he usually provided a check-up for people with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypercholesterolemia, and hypertension every Tuesday. He picked up his phone and called Wasan again. But the result was the same: Wasan cut him off.

“Wasan, don’t do this.” Gunn had never been this agitated in his life. He told himself he would never let Wasan walk away easily, but how did it turn out like this?

He drove to the hospital that was 5 kilometers from the RPHPH. After the meeting, Gunn would rush to meet with one of his palliative care patients and then head to Wasan's home. If Wasan was on duty, he would go to the police station. Gunn needed to see Wasan today, before this anxiety would destroy him until he couldn't get back to normal again.

Gunn parked his car in the area reserved for doctors. He intended to pass through the emergency room towards a walkway between two buildings when he saw a man in a khaki uniform walking out of the emergency room with a clasp envelope in his hands. Wasan looked back at Gunn and the two of them jerked to a halt, startling with this coincidence.

"Wasan." Gunn called his name. Wasan turned on his heels, preparing to walk away, but Gunn rushed to block his way. "Why didn't you pick up my call."

"Move. I've to get back to work." He told him without meeting his eyes.

Gunn grabbed Wasan's hand and squeezed it firmly. He didn't care the passerby's gaze.

Wasan looked up at Gunn with his eyes widening.

"Don't disappear like this, please." This was the first time Wasan saw the angry look in Gunn's eyes. "You can wait until the mystery untangles, but don't just disappear on me."

"You have the right to command me what to do?" Wasan tried to pull his hand away, but Gunn tightened his grip on the wrist.

"Why don't we talk and solve this problem together?"

"Since you've come here, the number of terminal stage patients' death has increased. The latest one was proven to die from lethal injection. Then, your name popped up in the crime scene. Everything related to you, you, and all over you. How can I be so closely related to the man who seemed so suspicious?!" Wasan lowered his voice. "How can you expect me...to trust the man who might involve in my mother's death?"

Gunn's grip went limp.

Wasan successfully pulled his hand away in that moment. He quickly took a step back and pointed his finger at Gunn. "If you ever

do this again, I'll throw you on the ground, handcuff you, and you'll be charged with an assault on the officer in the execution of his duty."

Gunn stood still while keeping his head down. "If I could prove my innocence, will you come back to me?"

Wasan gave him a silent.

Gunn looked up at him. His eyes that were once so warm, now seemed empty. "I promised to myself that I wouldn't let you go that easily. If proving that I've nothing to do with any of this is my only chance with you, then, no matter how dangerous it is, I'll do it."

Wasan pressed his lips together. He decided not to exchange words with Gunn any longer. However, after Wasan took a few steps forward, he stopped in his track and turned back without looking at another man's face. "If you're innocent and you find any clues, tell the police. Do not keep it to yourself or you'll be in danger." After having finished talking, he walked away.

Gunn stood still, watching Wasan disappeared from his eyesight.

Even if Wasan decided to run away from him for now, but the last thing he said really showed his sympathy. That made Gunn's heavy heart lightened up a little bit. He could see a glimpse of hope, despite its faint light. It was a hope to make Wasan belong solely to him forever.

Wasan walked back to his motorbike, the one he usually used for personal errands near his workplace. On its seat was a man in a black leather jacket and a pair of jeans. He heaved out a long sigh when he saw this man's bugging face. "In this freakin' hot weather, why on earth do you have to dress like that?"

"For shielding my skin from the sun and for the coolness's sake, Inspector!" The man got up and walked towards Wasan.

"What are you doing around here, Lieutenant Kong?"

The man who looked the least like a police officer shrugged his shoulders. For the outsiders, they might saw Lieutenant Kong as a drinking teenager who had no sustainable job more than a police officer. "Looking for something unusual in this hospital."

"What did you find?"

"Not much. But the Deputy doesn't want any private business nonsense." Lieutenant Kong winked at Wasan, which was very

annoying.

“Are you keeping an eye on me?” Wasan knitted his eyebrows.

“Not you. It’s ‘him’. But when I keep an eye on him, I also see you in that frame.” Lieutenant Kong protruded his mouth to the hospital building. “My minion could only gather teeny-weeny information. It’s all useless. So, I want to talk to you.”

“What is it?”

“Put your intimacy with Dr. Guntapat to use. Pull out information for us.” Kong looked left and right, making sure no one stopped on his track to listen to their conversation. “What did he tell you?”

“I don’t know anything more than you do because he and I are now nothing more than acquaintances.” Wasan pushed Kong out of the way. “I need to hurry. I’ve to conduct an interrogation in fifteen minutes.”

“Inspector,” Kong spoke before Wasan could mount on his motorbike. “Because that teeny-weeny information wouldn’t be useful to us, I want to propose an effective method that works just fine for me. We should get him drunk and hide a voice recorder somewhere. I don’t think anyone would be more suitable for this job other than you, Inspector. Only two people in a room, with alcohol in a level that could make people open their hearts. I think we might get something nice out of it.”

While talking, Lieutenant Kong handed Wasan a mini voice recorder.

Wasan looked at the thing in front of him and showed a sign of dissatisfaction. “Finding evidence isn’t my responsibility.”

“But it’s my duty to use the most effective method to collect evidence.” Lieutenant Kong shook the voice recorder in his hand. “It’d be ashamed if you feel uncomfortable. But I don’t think sending my minion or myself to get close to Dr. Gunn would do. If you won’t do it, then Dep. Supt. Bert might get even more suspicious...”

Wasan pulled the tiny voice recorder from Lieutenant Kong. “Leave it to me. I’ve nothing to hide”

“Thank you, sir. This case has been in the spotlight. We need to do everything we can.” Lieutenant Kong put on his cap, touching its brim to excuse himself, then turned on his heels to walk away. Wasan

wrapped his palm tightly around the voice recorder, knowing that Lieutenant Kong not only wanted to find the evidence, but also wanted to test whose side he was on. He had already chosen for himself: he was going to be an officer who held firm in his righteousness. But it seemed like others were still uncertain of his answer.

That's good. This might be an opportunity to learn more about that mysterious man. It's for the case's and his own sake.

Chapter Thirteen

Monitoring

“Nong, did you see my golden pen?” Gunn who had been looking above and below his desk for a while asked the nurse who was also rummaging for terminal patient’s files in the cabinet drawer.

“Not only your pen, Doctor, but I also don’t know where I left my patient’s file.” Nong turned around and let out a laugh. “It’s not something strange that I’m forgetful like this, but you’re still young, Doctor. You shouldn’t be this forgetful.”

“I’m that forgetful, always forget my steth and my pen that every staff at RPHPH knows my reputation.” Gunn opened the same drawer that he had already opened for the millionth time. “I thought I left it on my desk.”

“I also think I put my file in this drawer. But where did it go?” Each of them tried to find what they had lost. “Doctor, have you seen Ms. Urai’s file? The patient with CA Ovary^[28]?”

“Ah! The file is on my desk.” He took the patient’s file on his desk to Nong. “You must’ve laid it there and then forgot it.”

“I couldn’t remember bringing it out of the drawer. Phew. Old woman’s brain.” The nurse took the file and laughed with herself. “I bet you forget your pen at the ICU where we just left. You might want to check it out. Some staff might retrieve it for you.”

“Yeah. I’ll drop by to check.” Gunn carried his satchel on his shoulder. “I’ll go there then, Nong.”

That pen was expensive enough for Gunn to walk back to the Surgical ICU where he had just given a counsel for a patient with

advance stage gastric cancer who had complications after a surgical operation for making a gastrostomy^[29].

He went straight to a nurse who was caring for patients. “Excuse me, have you seen my golden pen falling around here?”

The nurse shook her head, “I haven’t seen it, Professor Gunn.” and then she seemed like to remember something. “Professor, Mr. Manop’s family members are all here. Do you want to speak to them right now?”

Gunn looked at his wristwatch. It was 4 p.m., the regular time that he got off work. He didn’t want to work overtime, but the opportunity to speak with the family to plan out a palliative treatment was rare. “Yes, I want to. Please call the family members and prepare the conference room for me.”

It was settled that Mr. Manop’s family members wanted to bring him home to let him pass away in peace. So, Gunn prescribed painkillers and anti-anxiety drugs for the patient.

It was already 6 p.m. when he left the hospital building. He got into his car and drove out of the hospital. His mind had been circling around Wasan. Gunn wanted to go see Wasan at his house, but if he couldn’t find him there, then he would go to the police station. Gunn must see him before he would gone mad and couldn’t work.

His phone buzzed shortly while he was on the red light, so he picked it up.

‘Meet me at 10.00 p.m.’

‘Wasan sent you a location.’

Gunn let out a long sigh, looking at a message that seemed like an order more than an invitation from Wasan with a mixture of anxiety and joy. “You’re so mean.”



The place Wasan had chosen was a famous bar and restaurant in downtown. It was an open-air eatery which offers live music suitable for chilling and hanging out at night, but not for Wasan. Reluctantly, he had to be here to carry out his mission. Dressed in a T-shirt and jeans, he walked into the bar area. He raised

his hand to call a waiter, who was busy wiping a counter, to order a small bottle of liquor, soda, and a bucket of ice.

The waiter quickly and courteously prepared his order. Although Wasan was out of his uniform at the moment, his character and hairstyle gave him away that he worked for the government, either a police officer or a soldier.

“Wasan.” Gunn called him at 10 p.m. sharp, like an alarm clock.

Wasan turned to look at the caller who was in a fit, navy blue shirt and light brown pants. Gunn’s jet black hair was set in a fashionable way. He looked so handsome that Wasan momentarily forgot to breathe, and women on a table behind him must have felt the same way. Drinking from his glass, he looked another way while Gunn was sitting on a chair next to him.

“On what occasion are we toasting?”

Wasan was quiet for a moment, trying to come up with the most reasonable excuse. “You want to be my special guy, but you haven’t noticed the change worth celebrating with me?”

“Is it that your three stars insignia turned to Thai theatrical crown above a star?”

He looked at Gunn from the corner of his eyes. “If you’ve already seen it, then why didn’t you give me a congratulation?”

“You’re such a pain in the ass...On the rock, please.” Gunn raised his hand to signal the waiter to pour his drink in a glass. “Stop bringing your rank promotion as an excuse. I know you don’t care about this kind of thing. You called me here after you had just threatened to knock me on the ground and handcuff me. And now you act like nothing happened. Actually, I’m quite paranoid.”

Wasan watched Gunn raising a glass of pure liquor with a few ice cubes to sip. He tried to focus on his work. He had to make Gunn trust him and give him the information as much as possible, no matter by which method. “I want to know more about you.”

“You’ve already known me now, it depends on what additional details you need.” Gunn turned his head with a smile. “Shoot.”

“How did you come to work in this remote place, far from your hometown?”

"I rarely stay at home. It's always been like that. I stayed in Bangkok to study since very young. After I graduated from medical school, I applied to work for the public hospital in Chiang Mai to fulfill my obligations of scholarship until I completed my specialist. I like my living in this northern province of Thailand, so I applied for a public hospital here." Gunn picked up a menu.

"No other obligations? Your father, mother, kids, wife?"

Gunn burst out laughing. "If I already had a wife and kids, then why am I bothering courting you? My older sister and my brother-in-law were taking care of my father, and I'm alone. I can choose to live however I want. But if I were to have a spouse here, I wouldn't go anywhere else."

"Don't put your hopes up too high on the spouse thing."

"I'm quite certain that my soulmate is here." Gunn drew his face closer. "Do you agree with me?"

"Come any closer and I'll splash the drink on your face."

"See? You've always hissed like a cat." Gunn returned to his previous position. "What about you? Why did you decide to be a police officer?"

"I come from a poor family. Mom had to carry dad's debts and raised three sons at the same time. So, I was determined to be the breadwinner of my family and to protect them from any harm." Wasan took a deep breath, glancing at the music band that was playing old but easy-listening international song. "Don't pay attention to my background. Tell me more about yours. I want to know yours. Tell me as much as possible."

"What should I talk about...the reason I chose to study specialist, then." Gunn finished his drink in one go. Seeing this, Wasan immediately snatched the bottle and poured him more. "I like home visiting. Do you know that one patient spends just a fraction of time at a hospital, but the rest of his time at home? So, home health care is critical. Not only that, I must understand the family background, society, and even have to apply spiritual understanding in my treatment. While studying as a specialist, I've learned about palliative care and I've found how valuable the quality of life of patients in their last moments is."

What Wasan had learned aside from Gunn's background was that he tended to be more talkative after the alcohol entered his bloodstream. Wasan barely touched his drink, but he kept pouring considerable amounts of alcohol for the other man. Gunn seemed to be a heavy drinker. Wasan tried to maintain this pleasant relaxing atmosphere to make Gunn trust him.

Two hours had passed. The rhythm of the music started to get more exciting. Dinner had vanished. Only empty bottles of liquor remained. Gunn had been drinking non-stop, and now he moved closer to Wasan that his side attached to him. One of Gunn's hands held his waist all this time, and there were several times his hand became too naughty, but Wasan let it go just for now.

"If there's a patient with a final stage cancer begging you to conduct lethal injection, would you do it?" This question was like a sudden hook. Gunn had now consumed an excessive amount of drinks, so it was hard to tell whether he would be knocked out or could instantly dodge it. Wasan hoped the result would be the former.

Instead of giving him an immediate response, Gunn absentmindedly looked at the alcohol bottle in front of him for a while before saying, "I would."

It's like a ceiling of the restaurant was about to collapse. Wasan's eyes grew wide, feeling as if his heart was going to stop beating. But what Gunn said next, forced him to listen carefully.

"I would if I could. But the practice is still illegal in Thailand. If I perform mercy killing, then it'd be violating the law and I'd end up in jail. Right now, all I could do is to ease their pains as much as possible before the patients die naturally from the illness." Gunn looked at Wasan. "Oh! And I used to talk about mercy killing. If there are next lectures, I'll invite you to attend one. Bring all the police officers, so that it'd get into your skulls that I've never taught anyone to do such a thing. I just collected this information to talk in my lecture because of its interesting aspect and to predict the possibility of it in Thailand, that's all. I'm stressed out too, you know? Today, I drink a lot because I've been under a lot of stress. I'm stressed out because of a sudden interrogation and because you keep a distance from me. It's not my fault at all. I'm just unlucky."

Wasan sighed as if he was relieved. Now, Gunn was drunk. He was talkative. His eyelids seemed heavy. His head started to sway from side to side. Seeing no point of leaving him here in this condition, Wasan looked out of the restaurant before turning back. "Did you bring your car? I'll drop you off."

"I did." Gunn patted his pocket for his key. "Sorry. I didn't think I'd drink till I'm drunk."

He sighed, paying for the meal, and reached for Gunn's pockets before picking out a remote car key. "Let's go home."

"You'll sleep with me tonight?" Gunn clung to Wasan's hem.

Wasan pulled Gunn up and practically carried him out. Fortunately, his footsteps were still stable. They walked to Gunn's silver bronze car. Wasan opened the door and helped Gunn climb into the passenger seat. As soon as he had slid into the seat, he shut his eyes painfully as if he was having a sudden severe dizziness. Wasan started the engine and turned on air condition for Gunn before leaving him alone in the car for a moment. Wasan walked back to the man in the black leather jacket, who had stood observing in front of the restaurant this entire time.

At that instant, the eyes of the seemingly drunk man were wide open. Gone was the sign of intoxication. Gunn sat up straight, looking at the direction of the restaurant and finding Wasan was talking to a man he had never met. So, he observed quietly from the dark inside the car.

"It's pointless," Wasan returned the recorder to Lieutenant Kong. "He is not the murderer."

Wasan said that because he was so fed up with Kong. Another officer seemed disappointed and tried to force the device back in Wasan's hand. "Please continue using it. He might spill something out after this."

"I think he won't. That guy's already fallen asleep. He'll be sober when awake."

"I must tell you that I don't care about sexy noises. So, you don't have to be shy, Inspector. I only wait for the talking part..."

Wasan's anger escalated past the boiling point. He grabbed Kong by his collar and forcefully yanked him close. "Don't fucking piss me

off. I'll let you decide whether to take this shit back or die here, Lieutenant."

Kong raised both of his hands in surrender, but he didn't wear a guilty expression. "Sorry, Inspector."

Wasan released Kong's collar, pushing the man from him and slammed the voice recorder into the Lieutenant's chest. Kong quickly snatched the device before it would drop to the ground. Wasan swiftly walked back to Gunn's car. He would leave his motorbike here. If there were time, he would come back for it. He slid into the driver's seat, turning to look at the tall man who was still in a deep sleep. Wasan reached for his head and straighten it. At that moment, Gunn seized Wasan's hand before he could pull back.

"I love you, Wasan," Gunn said with his eyes closed, holding Wasan's hand to his cheek. "Do you know that the drunk...always speaks the truth?"

Wasan's heart was thumping so hard that he could hear it clearly. His hand went numb, lacking any strength to break free from Gunn's grip. His touch slowly swallowed up Wasan's body, starting from his hands down to his chest, his heart, and finally to his toes. He bet people with paralysis must have felt this way. He couldn't control his body at all.

"And the drunk ..." Wasan finally said after several seconds of silence. "Would say something he'd forget when he's sober." He successfully pulled his hand away and inhaled deeply. "Where do you live?"

Gunn didn't answer because he was asleep again. Wasan growled in slight frustration before changing into the riding gear and inevitably turning to the direction of his house. When he arrived home, Wasan carried the tall man staggering to his bedroom. Wasan helped Gunn lie down on the bed and the man obediently complied. He stood with his arms akimbo, looking at the drunken man. Gunn in this condition looked somewhat tame, easy to control. The only problem was: he talked too much.

It was already 1 a.m. His brother and sister-in-law should have gone to bed by now. Wasan would tell his brother in the morning that he had brought a drunken man to sleep over at home. He turned

around, leaning to pick up a towel, but his hand was grabbed and he was pulled onto the bed. Gunn put his arms around Wasan's waist tightly with his eyes still closed.

"Let me go. I'm gonna take a shower." Wasan tried to remove Gunn's hands, but what happened next was too fast for Wasan to be on his guard. Gunn caught Wasan's shoulder and pinned him down. Straddling on top of Wasan's body, Gunn confined the man under his embrace.

"Gunn!" Wasan tried to push Gunn's large body out of him, but his strength disappeared as if it was completely drained out by the touch and the kiss mixed with the smell of alcohol. It's hard to deny that their bodies yearn for each other. With alcohol in his bloodstream, his body felt hot all over. His brain ordered him to wrap his legs around Gunn's waist. Wasan held Gunn's face in his hands while Gunn gave him a fiery, passionate kiss. When Gunn pulled away, Wasan stroked along the shirt buttons of the other party, tempting the man in front of him to unbutton himself. Shortly after that, their clothes were stripped off at the end of the bed.

With what happened next, Wasan felt that it had been his best decision to return the voice recorder back to Lieutenant Kong.



"Wasan, ask Doctor to sleep over with us again tonight. Gai will make spicy chicken salad. We'll have dinner together." Thongkum poked his head in to tell Wasan while he was **dressing in front of the mirror**. He turned to look at his brother who seemed particularly excited. Of course, the fact that the former home visit doctor, who shouldn't have any reason to visit them due to his patient's demise, appeared in a drunken state with Wasan would spark panic for Thongkum and his wife.

"You should invite him yourself, Thongkum." Wasan pouted his lips to the direction of the bathroom.

"You do it. Hey, I've no idea you and Doc have become close friends. I'm so happy. We should be there to help each other out."

Wasan's brother spoke incessantly before he disappeared into the kitchen. Wasan shook his head.

Wait until he knew that Wasan was dating Gunn. He would be shocked.

The bathroom door opened, and Gunn appeared with the same shirt and pants he wore last night. His hair was sticky-uppy. His furrowed eyebrows could easily tell the condition he was in.

"Headache?"

He massaged his eyebrows. "Do you have paracetamol?"

"Yes. One sec." In his uniform, Wasan arranged his collar before leaving the room to get a glass of water and some medicine from a cabinet for Gunn. Gunn thanked him and threw one tablet into his mouth, following by a whole glass of water.

"I had to hurry back home to change, or I'd be late for a ward round." Gunn raised the watch to look at the time. It was 7.30 a.m. "I'll return your favor later. Thank you for not letting me pass out at the restaurant last night. And I'll bring your bike to you."

"How could I? You'd have been killed by the robber. And for my bike, leave it to me."

Gunn kept his voice down to a whisper so that other members of this house wouldn't hear him. "Thank you for giving me a chance to wake up and see you lying next to me again."

"Too many thanks. Off you go!" Wasan handed the car key to Gunn and slapped his arm to chase him away. Gunn still refused to go, deliberately bending down and kissed Wasan on the cheek, before walking out of the room.

"Damn me!" Wasan covered his mouth with his hand.

How many more times will he be a sucker for the guy like him?



When the night fall, Mrs. Urai Dansom's house was in a total darkness. Urai looked through the dark to the door. She wanted to get up and switched on the light, but her body no longer allowed her to do that. She was diagnosed with a final stage ovarian cancer. It devoured her abdomen, lungs, as well as her spine. Her belly was

swollen while her limbs and face were scrawny. The pain in her body was too much to bear. Fortunately, Urai was a regular patient of Dr. Guntapat. He helped ease her pain and discussed with her about accepting the upcoming final moment of her life. The doctor said that he would visit her in two days.

Urai knew that she would die but she was still waiting for her third grandchild to be born in a few months. If only she could see her grandchild's face, she would no longer be afraid of death.

"Eid, would you turn on the light?" Urai called out for her daughter-in-law. "Is there anybody home?"

Silence was the only answer.

Urai thought that Eid might go out to the market, but usually, she would come back before dark. Five minutes later, the old woman heard the sound of slow footsteps on the wooden floor, and it was louder and louder. At first, Urai thought that it was Eid. But suddenly, the tall figure dressed in all black came standing at the door, strikingly frightened her.

Lying helplessly on the bed, she cried for help.

But her voice was so faint, almost inaudible.

With just one injection, her last breath was taken away by that dark silhouette.

The shadow got to his feet at the same time he heard someone opened the door and the light outside flicking on. He quickly escaped through the window, silently but quickly.

As the silhouette jumped out of the window, a long, slender, golden object dropped from his pocket onto the grass below. The object reflected the light from the house. No one noticed this anomaly because of the darkness. Not long after that, the cry of a girl could be heard from that house. Followed by a wail of a young man, calling out for his mother.

Chapter Fourteen

The Man Whose Name Appears in Every Case

"I think we should ask for a local authority's support to report every case related to terminal patients who died at home to us, sir."

"Well, we've already known that Pharmacist Boze was the one who did it." Deputy Superintendent Bert looked at Wasan with a bored expression. "You just won't let it go, will you?"

"Are you sure? We've performed an autopsy on only one case." Wasan looked at Bert with a determined look on his face.

"Usually, when patients die from natural causes, we shouldn't be handling them." Bert lowered his gaze to read a document in his hand to end the conversation.

Wasan walked away from the Deputy Superintendent 's desk. He knew that Bert was turning a deaf ear to him. Therefore, He must act like water under the bridge, secretly taking the matter into his own hands. Starting from telling Tae that he wanted the locals to help reporting to the police whenever there was terminal patient passing away at home. This would increase the police's workload and leave many officers with dissatisfaction; however, Wasan had no choice.

After Wasan had finished imprisoning an accused, he dropped by RPHPH where Tae worked, before he would be on call duty.

"I don't know how much I can help, but I'll send your request to the families who were taking care of their terminally ill members and to the village headman." Then, a thought occurred to Tae. "The latest case was Auntie Urai. She just died from ovarian cancer. Her body is

at the temple. Perhaps you should try to talk to her family members, in case they've noticed anything unusual, Inspector."

"Yes. Thank you."

Wasan knew that he went above and beyond his call of duty by investigating the case that wasn't even his and they even almost successfully closed it. Wasan was still skeptical because Pharmacist Boze had just moved here less than a year. So, he couldn't explain why the numbers of terminal-stage patients who passed away at home had increased these past three years. The more he saw how Deputy Superintendent Bert's being indifferent to this issue, the more he grew frustrated.

Wasan drove his motorbike towards the temple where the funeral took place. Mrs. Urai's funeral was held in the pavilion next to the chapel. It was 3 p.m. in the afternoon. Not so many people showed up at the funeral now, but a lot were expected to follow soon in the evening, to attend the second night of the rite. Wasan went straight to a young woman who was arranging the chairs in front of the temple pavilion.

"Excuse me, is this Mrs. Urai's funeral?"

The young woman looked up at him. "Yes."

"I want to speak with her son or daughter or whoever lived with Mrs. Urai. Can you help me? "

The woman led Wasan to Urai's son and her daughter-in-law. After the meeting, Wasan just realized that Eid, his childhood friend was this family's daughter-in-law. From their conversation, Wasan found that the couple didn't notice anything unusual that night. The two went out to the market until dark. When they came back, they discovered that Urai had forever gone, which was quite expected since both of them knew the condition and stages of Urai's illness. Moreover, the doctor had already told them that with these symptoms, Urai would have lived no more than three months.

After running around all day long, Wasan came back empty handed. Still, he believed that if he continued to find the clues on his own, he would have discovered something to unravel this whole mystery.

Wasan wanted this case to close soon. He too felt hurt that he had to keep a distance from Gunn. He wanted to be with Gunn the same way Gunn wanted to be with him. However, before that, Wasan must be confident that Gunn wasn't the murderer under the mask of a healing angel.



Two men were standing on the sidewalk in front of the medical ward, facing each other. One of them had a panic expression while the other stared at the frightening one through the brim of a black cap on his head with fierce and wild eyes like a wolf. The man in a male nurse uniform clung to his bag, quickly turning around.

"Hey." A voice of a man wearing a black hat called out to him, stopping the male nurse in his tracks.

"What do you want?" His voice trembled.

"Can we find a private place to talk?" The man said and grinned. "There's something I want to ask you."

He shut his eyes tightly. "S...see you at the same place."

"Sure."

Once he gave the response, the male nurse reluctantly turned back and found that the man had disappeared like a ghost, which was typical for the man named Kong aka Pol.Sub-Lt. Archa. He didn't want to know this person at all, but he had a reason to unwillingly become a pawn for this detective, who could sneak in everywhere like a shadow without people seeing.



"You should eat, Tum." Lieutenant Kong slid vegetable stir-fry on a dish to the young man in front of him. "Why do you lose your appetite? Is it because of me?"

"Tell me what you want, Lieutenant." Tum ignored the food before him. Right now, they were sitting on the terrace of an à la carte

restaurant not far from the hospital. It was an uncrowded place suitable for meeting someone privately.

"Why do you think I only come to see you because I need something?" Kong put the meat onto another man's plate. "I might just want to have lunch with you."

"You said you wanted to ask me something. Then, please ask."

"Aye, I thought we could have a moment before talking business." Kong dropped the silverware on his plate with a clang, making the man before him jump a little. "Alright, I'll get to the point. Have you searched through Dr. Gunn's office?"

"I..." Tum turned another way uncomfortably. "Not yet."

"This is not the answer I wanted." Kong leaned into his chair, looking at his companion with a penetrating gaze. "Looks like your sister will have to spend many comfortable years behind bar on drug trafficking charge."

Tum's round eyes widened before looking down because he couldn't endure Kong's intense gaze. "I'm waiting for a chance. If my ward needs consultation with Dr. Gunn about our terminal patients, I'm going to volunteer to deliver a consultation form to his office. But now, I still have zero chance to do that."

"Don't make me wait for too long," Kong poured water into the glass for Tum. "Next time, I don't want useless insignificant information that I've already known. I want a top-notch deal. The deeper private matter the better."

"Why don't you ask Inspector Wasan to find the information for you? He should be the right man for the job." Tum quickly offered an idea.

"I did, but it didn't work. Come on, he had to protect his boyfriend for sure. Who would want his boyfriend to go to jail? That's why a person who could help me must be a neutral, detached colleague like you." Kong smiled from the corner of his mouth. "When shall we meet again? Hm?"



Pharmacist Chanchai's autopsy report was now in Deputy Superintendent Bert's hands. He thoroughly read the results. Dr. Bunnakit pointed out that there were two marks. The first one was from the rope's pressure that was used to hang the deceased. The second one was from violent strangulation which resulted in severe bruises in neck muscles and the shattering of the hyoid bone^[30]. In addition, small bruises were found along his arms and elbows. However, they didn't find any toxic, drugs, or narcotic substances from blood and urine test results.

From his previous conversation with Bunnakit before the official report was released, he already knew from Bunnakit that there was a high possibility that this was a murder case. That meant someone had strangled the deceased to death before hanging the body to stage the murder.

Who did it and why? This was what he must carry on the investigation.

Bert issued a subpoena to hospital personnel who lived near Pharmacist Boze to come and provide some details. Everyone who received the summons were well cooperative. They all said that they didn't notice anything unusual because they were sleeping. Nevertheless, there was one clue that's particularly interesting to him.

Sawika, a nurse who stayed with her surgeon husband at his residence, which was cater-cornered from Pharmacist Boze's, told him something:

"On that day, we were sleeping at home, but the hospital called my husband at 4 a.m. because of an urgent case. So, I woke up at the same time and went to the bathroom. Five minutes later, I prepared to go back to bed. When I was going to fall asleep, I heard someone footsteps in front of our house. At first, I thought that it's my husband, so I ignored it. But when I couldn't hear him open the door, I suspiciously looked out of the window, and saw someone entering Pharmacist Boze's house through its front door. I'm not sure whether he's Pharmacist Boze or someone else. It's very dark..."

"The person who entered Pharmacist Boze's house, did he walk in casually or did he tamper with something?" Bert asked and Sawika shook her head.

"He just strolled in. I think he even used a key. I thought it was Pharmacist Boze who might have dropped by his house during his night shift, so I didn't think much of it and went back to sleep until six o'clock in the morning."

There were only fingerprints of the deceased on the doorknob. The person Sawika had seen must have been Pharmacist Boze, who had just returned after assaulting Inspector Wasan. The assault occurred at Wasan's house at around 9 p.m., but Pharmacist Boze returned to his residence at 4 a.m. Where did he go during that gap? And when did the murderer enter? Bert wondered.

"You didn't hear anything unusual after that, right?"

"Not at all."

"What about your husband?"

"He's in the operating room from 4 to 7 a.m. During a walk to the hospital, he said he didn't see anything. Every nurse at the operating room can confirm that my husband was in the operating room all that time."

"Did you and Pharmacist Boze know each other personally?"

Sawika nodded. "I used to visit the patients with Pharmacist Boze. We talked a little."

"Did he have a girlfriend?"

Sawika tried to remember. "I've never heard of his girlfriend, but I heard a rumor that..." She paused for a few seconds. "Pharmacist Boze was gay."

Only one thing that was missing from the crime scene was a cellphone. It was presumed that the cellphone was taken by the murderer. Although the information is not yet verified, the late pharmacist must be in a relationship with someone because of the condom they found in the bedroom. The crime scene investigator didn't find the used condom for it probably had been thrown into the central dumpster. At least, it could confirm that he might have a partner who could go in and out of his house freely. That person, whoever it might be, had never shown up since Boze's demise. This is very suspicious.

Bert summoned Pimpa, Boze's closest friend, who was also a pharmacist, for interrogation

"For over a year that we knew each other and worked together, Boze and I were really close friends, officer. " Pimpa expressed a somber face when she mentioned her late buddy. "Although we were close, Boze rarely told me about his private matters. The only thing I can confirm is that, Boze liked men. I've heard that he once dated a man outside our profession, but he refused to spill it out. Plus, it seemed like they broke up months ago."

"Do you know if someone has been involved with Pharmacist Chanchai lately?"

"No..." Suddenly, Pimpa's eyes grew wide. "Um, officer, that two days, when Boze had disappeared, there was a man came asking for him at the pharmacy room. I still think it's kind of strange."

Bert frowned. "Who?"

"He was a doctor. His name is Guntapat."



This past week, Wasan didn't answer Gunn's call nor his text. Again. However, this time, Gunn was no longer upset because Wasan had shown him his concern and his goodwill. Gunn was well aware that Wasan had tried to get him drunk to spill a secret even though Wasan didn't want to. Moreover, Wasan was apparently angry when he secretly helped Gunn by returning the voice recorder to a man who must be another police officer. The way Wasan looked at him as well as his help when he was acting drunk was sincere and genuine.

Wasan was ready to open up his heart to him. There was only one thing that needed to be done: proving that Gunn wasn't the murderer.

Gunn attended Pharmacist Boze's cremation at a large temple near the hospital. Lots of guests were healthcare providers from various sectors. Gunn planned to gather the guests' information: the expression, the demeanor, and the reaction of those who seemed suspicious. He would memorize them and collect more information later. So, he chose a seat where he could easily observe people who were walking in and out of the pavilion.

"Hi Gunn," Dr. Somsak called him from behind.

Gunn quickly turned back and greeted the man.

"Professor Somsak, hello. Do you want to sit here?"

"Sure, actually, I was gonna sit next to you." A middle-aged physician in a black shirt sat on a plastic chair next to Gunn. Director Somsak was known as 'a man who can't be touched by time.' In his early fifties, not many people could manage to maintain good health like him. He was an example of people who exercise regularly. With his tall figure and muscular body still in a good shape, countless ladies fell head over heels for him. "It's unbelievable something like this happened near our hospital."

"I agree. It's unbelievable." Gunn turned to the crematory. "He helped me a lot when we were visiting the patients together. I'd never thought he's having so much trouble that he took his own life."

Somsak glanced at Gunn. "You don't know? "

There was a look of surprise on Gunn's face. "Know what?"

"The autopsy result suggests that Pharmacist Boze might have been murdered."

Gunn's eye widened. "And...who did it?"

"The police are trying to find the murderer." Somsak took a deep breath, pausing for a few seconds and then said, "It seems like Pharmacist Boze got an inspiration from you."

Gunn narrowed his eyes after he heard what Somsak said. "What do you mean?"

"As he secretly performed euthanasia and smuggled drugs from the warehouse to kill the final stage patients by injection, he might have gotten this idea from you."

The air between two physicians became heavy in that instant.

Gunn moved slightly away from Somsak, looking troubled. "It's because of Pharmacist Boze's suicide note, right? The police have interrogated me about this. I insisted that I've nothing to do with his action. Anyone could type that letter on the computer and framed me."

Somsak looked the other way like he saw something behind Gunn. "But it seems like the police want to interrogate you more."

Gunn swiftly turned back and found two officers walking towards them. What's happening now made all the people who was attending

the funeral immediately went silent, especially the deceased's parents who looked at him in panic.

Everyone stared at the police and Gunn.

Gunn got to his feet when he realized that the police targeted him.

"We want to invite Dr. Guntapat for further interrogation at the police station." The Investigator spoke with a calm and solemn face.

Gunn frowned. "Do I have to go now?"

Somsak stood up and patted on Gunn's shoulder lightly as if he wanted to give him consolation. "Give full cooperation to the police. If you're innocent, there is nothing to worry about. Tell me if you need any help."

Why did it turn out this way?

Gunn stood still momentarily to calm his mind before obediently following the officers. His hands clenched tightly, trying to suppress his anxiety that could burst out at any moment. Gunn tried to calm down and inhale deeply.

Why does my hope to solve the mystery seem so far away?

And why do I become the police's suspect?

Did I do something suspicious, or did I do something wrong?

Chapter Fifteen

The Lost Pen

"Wasan, don't go in just yet." Aim, a Detective Inspector, raised his hands to stop Wasan from breaking into an interrogation room in which Guntapat and Deputy Superintendent Bert were. Wasan took a few steps back with an uncomfortable expression. Aim looked at Wasan with sympathetic eyes. "You'd better go back and wait at your desk. I'll tell you how it goes when it's done."

Guntapat was sitting on a chair, facing the Deputy Superintendent, with a desk in the middle. The room was gloomy, full of pressure. The air inside the room was so heavy and suffocating. Guntapat sat up straight in his chair with a calm expression, not showing any fluster or guilt.

"I've heard you'd asked for Pharmacist Chanchai the day before he died, and on the same day he died. Is it true?" Bert shot a question at Guntapat in a sharp tone.

"It's true." He answered without any hesitation.

"Can you tell me why you tried to find him? "

"He and I didn't know each other personally as I've already said before," He replied. "That day, I wanted to consult Pharmacist Boze about antihypertensive dosage of a home visiting patient. I went back to review the prescribed medication from the hospital and thought that it might not be the same one we'd given to the patient. I was worried about the side effects. Pharmacist Boze used to visit the patient with me, so he's the only person who should be able to remember the patient's medicine under my care." Guntapat paused for a moment and then continued, "I don't have his phone number or

LINE account to contact him personally, so I went to the pharmacy room and asked for him. On the first day, the pharmacist lady told me Pharmacist Boze had called in sick. The next day, she said that he had disappeared and couldn't be contacted. When I couldn't find him, I didn't think much of it. I planned to find the information about the drug myself or consult other pharmacists instead."

Deputy Superintendent Bert looked at him with a gaze that trying to penetrate to his soul. "Did you know that Pharmacist Chanchai was gay?"

Guntapat raised his eyebrows. "Gays need not to be always aware of each others' sexual orientation. I haven't known about this, sir."

"Do you know whether the deceased was in any relationship with anyone?"

He shook his head. "We barely knew each other. Pharmacist Boze' never told me anything about his private matter."

"Do you insist that you haven't been in a relationship with Mr. Chanchai?"

"No, I haven't. I like dating one at a time." Guntapat smiled. "There's only one person that I love. He's working here. Everyone should know that. "

Deputy Superintendent Bert showed no emotions on his face, but Guntapat knew that this answer would create a small taste of disgust for the straight man. "That's another thing I want to ask; are you and Inspector Wasan really together? "

Guntapat went silent for a while, as if he was trying to find the right answer. "It's not quite being together. But we do have our sweet moment together and are closer than being an acquaintance. Wasan won't accept me until I can prove myself innocent. For Wasan, justice comes first. He just told me that if I were a murderer, he'd be the one who handcuffs me" While saying, his eyes full of admiration. "Please don't accuse him of taking my side or protecting me. He's doing his best. Inspector Wasan...is a very good cop."

After roughly an hour had passed, Inspector Aim walked to Wasan, who was sitting at his desk with knitted eyebrows. Aim sat on

a chair next to the desk. "Dep. Supt. Bert allowed Dr. Guntapat to go back." He looked at Wasan's face. "You okay?"

"I'm not okay, Aim." Wasan let out a long sigh. "Why does every single thing point to Gunn?"

"Until now, Dr. Gunn hasn't told anything that contradicts other evidence. He might really be innocent."

"I think Gunn is involved in this, one way or another." Wasan looked up at Aim. The officer before Wasan was the one whom he felt that he could talk to in this police station. "Even though I'm his...special guy, he is still hiding something from me. I want to know what it is, but I'm also scared of the truth. I'm scared that this betrayal would hurt me in a way I couldn't imagine."

"What did Dr. Gunn tell you about this?"

"He insisted that he's innocent, and he'd prove his innocence to me." Wasan looked down at his hands on the desk. "I don't know which to believe between my instinct and Guntapat."

"I suggest you do nothing. Just wait." Aim gently squeezed Wasan's hand to reassure him. "You should take a step back. Don't get yourself too much involved. Focus on your duty until the truth is revealed, then you can decide what to do next. This way, you should suffer the least pain."

"Thank you."

Aim nodded before getting to his feet and carrying on his own duty.

Wasan spent time to contemplate while eyeing LINE messages that Guntapat had actively sent him all these time with the scurrying mind. The latest message Guntapat had sent was,

'I was interrogated by the police for the second time. Do you have any idea why?'

He wanted to help Gunn as much as he could, but he just couldn't. The paranoid inside him appeared like a transparent glass barrier between them.

Between the two of them, it was like they saw each other through the glass wall. They could see each other but could not truly reach for each other.



"Jon! Don't run too far!" Eid shouted to warn the boy who was holding a toy plane and running out of the house. "Hurry inside. It's going to rain!"

"I wanna play with *Ai Mez*. One sec!" Eid's seven-year-old son replied.

She shook her head tiredly. Her mother-in-law cremation already sucked out all of her energy, but she still had two naughty boys to take care of. Eid placed the clothes she was folding into a basket, then walked out to sit and watch her two boys playing tag on the front lawn. Their joyful laughs helped ease the melancholy atmosphere in the past week. Eid was glad that Urai finally found peace.

She stroked her protruding belly. But, it was a shame that Urai had passed away before she could see her youngest niece come into this world.

"What's this?" Jon's chatter could be heard.

"Dunno. Wanna take it to Ma?" Mez said.

Eid turned to look at Jon, who was running back to her with an object in his hand. The object was golden and glistening through the external muddy layer that covered most of its surface. Eid accepted it to take a look before turning to pick up the rag hanging on the clothesline to wipe out the mud.

"It's..." She looked at it with curiosity. It was a pen. Removing the cap, it revealed the tip of an expensive fountain pen. Two boys seemed excited. "Jon, where did you find it?"

"By the house, under grandma's bedroom window." Jon pointed to the back. "Is it a pen, Ma?"

"Who could've left the pen here..." Eid was deep in thought.

"Can we keep it, Ma?" Mez asked.

"No, it looks expensive. We must return it to the owner." Their mother's answer made the two boys disappointed. Eid looked up at the sky where the dark clouds began to block out the sun. "Go inside, honey. It's going to rain soon."



Wasan ran through the rain to the gold shop where the robbery and gun crime occurred. The shooting caused one person seriously injured. From the security camera, the robber used gun to threaten the shop owner. And a good Samaritan tried to attack the robber from behind, fighting for the weapon. However, he missed, and the gold seller was shot in the chest and seriously injured.

Wasan inquired witnesses till it passed his working hours before returning to the police station to gather the documents and case files and bringing them back to his house. It was 6 p.m. when Wasan stepped out of the police station. His stomach rumbled, which made him realize that he hadn't eaten anything since noon.

The rain had stopped when he arrived home with big-size roasted sour sausage in banana leaf with sticky rice. He was starving enough to devour another box of a coconut pudding. Besides, his sister-in-law had also made a chicken curry and a bamboo shoot salad with spicy crab paste for Wasan.

When his stomach was only half filled, Thongkum poked his head into the kitchen. "Wasan, are you full yet?"

"Not even close," Wasan replied with a mouthful of rice. He reached his hand to scoop up the bamboo shoots in the cup. "Is something wrong?"

"Eid wanted to see you. Saying she found a valuable item." Thongkum pointed towards the front of the house. "Go see her when you're done."

"No more after-work job!" Wasan grumbled. "Please tell Eid to go to the police station."

"I've already told her but she insists that she wants to consult with you. So, when you're done, hurry outside." After delivering his message, Thongkum walked away.

"Hey! You really have to destroy my happiness, haven't you?" Wasan put down his spoon with frustration, then swallowing the rest of the food in his mouth before standing up to finish this business.

Wasan had known Eid since they were really young. She was born and raised here, and stayed in their hometown until she got married and mothered two kids.

Eid quickly approached Wasan when she saw him coming out of the house. "Wasan, I need your advice."

"What's up?"

"You once asked me if I found something strange at home. Well, my son found this outside our house. I don't know how it got there." She rummaged through her tote bag.

"Your third child?" Wasan pointed out to Eid's protruding belly that was bigger than the last time he saw.

"Yeah, it's too bad granny Urai don't get to see her granddaughter...ah, found it." She handed something to Wasan.

At first, he wasn't sure what it was, but when he touched and scrutinized it, his entire body was frozen like a snowstorm had blown through him. He looked up at Eid with panicked eyes that made her marvel.

"Eid, where did you find it?"

"My son, Jon, found this pen in the mud, under granny Urai's bedroom window. I don't know who accidentally left it. It looks quite expensive. There should be someone looking for it. Please help me find the owner of this thing, Inspector."

"Well...before the granny passed away, did you have any doctor visiting your house? "

"The Doctor called us to schedule the appointment, but the granny had died two days before the date."

"What day did granny die?"

"Last Wednesday."

Last Wednesday was the day after Gunn and Wasan slept together.

Wasan felt like the ground beneath him had vanished. His ears could no longer recognize any sounds. The hand holding the golden pen was shaking. He stared at Eid who looked back at him suspiciously and tried to calm himself before speaking with his usual tone. "Leave...it to me."

"Hmm, thanks." Eid turned around and walked towards her motorcycle that parked in front of the house.

When she drove away, Wasan's knees buckled. He took a step back before collapsing on a wooden bench. He looked down at the object in his hand and felt the need to scream to relieve his resentment.

Wasan knew what this thing was and to whom it belonged. He tried to think in a positive way that it could belong to anyone, but only a few people in this area would use this type of luxury pen.

This was the same beautiful pen that usually resided in a left chest pocket on a clean white lab coat of the man who always said he loved Wasan. It belonged to...the man whom he wanted to give his body and heart.

Wasan's brain was all numb. He didn't know what he should do next.



Tah jumped out of a chair and retreated to the corner of the room when he saw a man in a police uniform walking into a local liquor store. He was the police officer who cruelly handcuffed him when he was accused of stealing money and gold at the funeral. Thanks to the daughter of the deceased, he wasn't pressed charges since she had received most of her father's valuables back safely. Fortunately, there was also a witness who coincidentally saw someone hand Tah the cash at the liquor store. Otherwise, he would have gone into jail.

"In...In...Inspector." The skinny man repeatedly raised his hands to greet Wasan.

"I want to ask you something." Wasan came in and grabbed a chair to sit down. Tah tried to retreat further even though he was already stuck in the corner. "I won't do anything. Come closer."

Tah reluctantly came back to sit where he was.

Wasan pulled up his phone and turned on Gunn's photos he'd saved from his Facebook profile. He showed them to Tah. "Is this the man who gave you the cash that day?"

Tah knitted his eyebrows. "I didn't see his face. He wore a mask and a hat. And it's dark."

"From his shape, body and height, do you think it's him?"

"That person was quite tall, unlike our people. If you ask me, yeah, he fairly resembles the guy, but I really didn't see his face, Inspector." Thinking that this answer would make Wasan angry, Tah rearranged his words. "You could say that he's the same guy, but I'm not sure, sir."

Wasan sighed and kept his phone in his pocket. He wouldn't get any more information for this. "Next time, don't accept any cash from a stranger."

"No sir, I won't do it again. I'm sorry, sir." Tah clasped his hands together towards the officer.

Wasan stood up and walked out of the store.

Why did he have to steal money and give it to Tah? Why did he have to enter the house after the patient died? Why did he do that? Or the person who entered the house and gave money to Tah, and the person who murdered terminal stage patients were different persons? Or the intruder stole valuables to slander Tah, making it seemed like a burglary to cover up his real intention.

Wasan raised his hand to his chest. Right now, the golden pen Eid brought him was inside his left pocket. It was like poison that constantly ate away his heart. Wasan knew that the best way was to confront and ask Gunn whether this was really his pen. But he would keep it cool for now. Wasan would cautiously try to find the evidence without letting Gunn know that he was now the number one suspect in Wasan's eyes.

Chapter Sixteen

Staging

Tum carried a paper in which the ward physician had written the consultation about palliative care for the patient with terminal kidney cancer in bed number 6 to Dr. Guntapat. The petite male nurse was standing in front of Guntapat's office awkwardly. This paper should be placed in a basket labeling 'Consultation Form.' However, he had to do more than that. His mission was to get inside and rummage through Dr. Guntapat's office to find if there were any interesting clues, take pictures, and send them to his sworn enemy.

Tum extended his hand to push the door open.

Crap. It's locked.

If Lieutenant Kong came to extort information from him today, Tum wouldn't be able to give him anything again. He couldn't do much aside from hoping that Lieutenant Kong wouldn't do as he had threatened.

While Tum was a nurse who helped people, his sister was a victim of narcotic drugs. She really used drugs but had never involved in drug trafficking. Lieutenant Kong helped Tum's sister from jail with the evidence he brought. However, this freedom came with the tremendous debt Tum must repay.

"Hey, Tum." Nong called out to him. Tum whipped around with a slightly panicked face. He quickly raised his hand to greet his senior professional associate.

"Hello, Ms. Nong."

"What are you doing here?" Nong took out a key to unlock the door.

Tum's eyes fixed on the key that was hanged with a brown long-tailed cat doll.

"Ah...oh! I come here to send the consultation form." Tum hurriedly placed the paper in the basket. "The ward physician wants to rush the consulting process because the patient doesn't look well. And I'm about to get off my night shift, so I volunteer to bring the form."

"I see," Nong pushed the glass door into the office. "Hurry, go back to sleep, child. When will you be on duty again?"

"Late night shift as usual, er...Ms. Nong?" He swiftly called out before she close the door. "Is there a restroom here that I can use?"

Nong smiled broadly. "That's why I saw you try to open the door. Of course, child. There's a restroom on the right. You go ahead and use it."

"Thank you," Tum followed Nong in.

What he saw was a spacious office, with only two desks and three document cabinets. There were boxes scattered everywhere as if they were in the middle of a relocation. He looked at one of the desks that had 'Guntapat Akaramaytee, M.D.' label on it. The table was filled with books and documents that were organized in order. Tum couldn't go ahead and rummage through anything in front of Nong, but he had a plan.

After finishing his business in the restroom, Tum picked out his phone, placed it on the edge of the sink and left it just like that. He came out to see Nong scratching her head in front of the cabinets.

"Who moved my patient file again? Or did I move it myself and don't remember? I'm so forgetful lately that it's getting out of hand, Tum."

He tried to smile dryly. "Is there anything I can help?"

"It's okay, child. I'll take care of it myself. I'll find it eventually."

"Okay. Thank you for letting me use the restroom, Ms. Nong. I'll get going now." Tum greeted her and rushed out of the office.

He chose to skip his napping time to get this mission over with. So, he walked back to his room in the hospital staff residence to wait for the right moment before walking back into the hospital, one hour

later, in a casual attire. He returned to his workplace at the medical ward, and asked his on-duty colleague.

"Hey, Joy. Has Professor Gunn come to look at the patient yet?"

Joy gazed at him with a surprised look. "Not yet, but he should be arriving soon. What's up?"

"I forgot my phone in the restroom in Pali office." Tum expressed that he was fed up with himself. "I wanna borrow the key from Ms. Nong to take back my phone."

"Crap, how could you forget such an important thing? I bet you stayed up late until you're dazed." Joy turned her head to the medical ward's front door. "They'd arrive at any moment. Go sit down and wait inside."

"Okay," Tum dragged the chair to sit near Joy who was diligently receiving medical orders.

After he asked many people, Dr. Guntapat usually started his round at nine o'clock in the morning and he would go to the female medical ward first. Then, he would come to Tum's male medical ward. Now, it was ten o'clock sharp. Soon, Dr. Guntapat and Ornanong would arrive here.

The medical ward door was opened and a group of people entered the ward. Leading the group was a tall man in a short lab coat over a dark blue shirt, following by Ornanong and a female intern.

If you compared all the physicians in this hospital and looked for the best-looking one, all people here would give all the votes to Dr. Guntapat. Even Tum was shocked by the doctor's solemn coolness as his long legs in dark gray pants stepped in. Tum quickly turned his gaze away from Dr. Guntapat to Ornanong. He got to his feet and quickly walked towards her.

"Hello, professor, may I speak to Ms. Nong for a second?" Tum bowed for several times to apologize for the interruption.

Gunn nodded and smiled. He didn't mind and looked at the patient charts before turning to talk to the medical intern.

"Ms. Nong, I forgot my phone in the restroom this morning."

"Good lord! I didn't go in there after you, so I didn't see it. Otherwise, I'd have kept it for you."

"That's alright, Ms. Nong. I can take it back myself. Can I borrow the key? I'll return it to you later."

Nong pulled out the key from her pocket without hesitation. "Take it, child. We'll be here for a while. If you can't find me, you can leave it at Home Visiting Nurse Room."

"Okay, I'm sorry for inconvenience I caused." Tum quickly walked away from the group. With a relief, he took a glance at Gunn, who didn't seem to suspect anything.

The petite man promptly walked out of the ward and headed to Dr. Gunn's office. He easily unlocked the door. When he got into the office, Tum took a deep breath to gather his concentration before picking up the phone in the restroom and walking towards Dr. Gunn's desk. He started searching on the desk, from the documents to the books. However, everything seemed normal. There must be something that Lieutenant Kong wanted.

Tum opened the drawer. He saw a pen box, an invitation letter to be a guest speaker, a physician certification of narcotic drugs for medical use, two books on palliative care, and a photo of an approximately ten-year-old Guntapat with a woman who should be his mother. Tum continued to the last drawer, a textbook on *Forensic Toxicology* and one on *An Autopsy* were lying at the bottom.

"Toxicology?" Tum flipped through the textbook quickly and saw Bunnakit's signature on the first page. Other than that, he didn't see anything else written on the pages. Tum took the pictures of everything he saw with his phone before rearranging everything to the former condition. He'd already spent more than fifteen minutes, so he should hurry back to return the key before someone got suspicious.



"Well done, Sweet Pea," Kong reached out his hand. "Please hand over your phone."

Tum's eyes grew wide. "Why?"

"Delete all of our messages because, after this, I won't be in touch with you anymore. From now on, we never know each other." He

urged Tum. "Hand it, quick!"

Tum reluctantly handed over his phone and leaned into the chair, looking around the empty a la carte restaurant. "Lieutenant, you would actually leave me alone, right?"

Kong stopped chewing a toothpick and looked up at him. "I can hang around if you want."

"No!" Tum answered without any hesitation.

Kong chuckled while deleting his number and LINE contact from Tum's phone and returning it back when he was done.

"I guess we've to say goodbye at this point. This meal's on me. You keep the change." Kong placed the one-hundred-baht bill on the table and got to his feet. He put his hands into his pockets and walked out of the restaurant.

Tum looked at an empty dish absent-mindedly for a moment before letting out a sigh of relief.

He's gone finally, his nemesis named Kong. Please, do not let him meet this man again whether in this life, or any lives.



"Please tell the nurse at RPHPH to talk to me by this afternoon about the patient whom we will send back with syringe driver^[31]. And for the patient with kidney cancer, please confirm his family meeting^[32] time for me so that I could clear the OPD accordingly." Gunn briefed the rest of his today's work for Nong while she was unlocking the door to the unfinished Pali office.

Today, he had many consulting rounds till now, which was already half-past twelve, and then he had to check up on the appointed patients at 1 p.m. Gunn rushed towards his desk to search for the guest speaker invitation letter to schedule an appointment on his phone. Then, he would find a small amount of time to gobble something.

"This morning, it took me ten minutes to find auntie Mann's file. Actually, the file was right there, only it was placed in the wrong alphabetical orders." Nong turned to look at Gunn.

"You worked so hard. It's normal that sometimes you're confused and forgetful." Gunn opened the drawer and picked out the letter. He was about to push the drawer back, but something strange at the corner of his eyes caught his attention.

The photo of him and his mother had never been placed under other documents.

Whatever he added inside the drawer, Gunn would always place this photo to the top.

Gunn's angular face turned frighteningly blank. He raised his head to look at Nong, who was inputting some information on the computer.

"Nong, have you ever rummaged through my drawer?" He asked.

"I've tried to find some files on the desk, but I've never touched the drawers. I don't think I'd leave something in your drawer either." Nong glanced at Gunn. "Did you lose something again?"

"Nothing is missing." Gunn sighed lightly, looking at the drawer with slight confusion. "The male nurse who asked for the key, who was he?"

"His name is Tum. He's working at Male Internal Medicine 2, where we went to check up on a kidney cancer patient. He delivered a consulting form this morning and asked to use our restroom, but forgot his phone in there. He was just on the night shift. The lad must have been dazing."

"Oh, I see." Gunn laid down the photo on top of all the documents as usual and closed the drawer. He opened other drawers only to find that everything was in its place. Nothing went missing.



It already passed working hours when Gunn walked out of the palliative care room. He just had time to contemplate what was happening in his life.

Firstly, it looked like Wasan and Gunn were temporarily separated, which was acceptable. Gunn did not think much into it.

Secondly, the police were focusing on him as the prime suspect. Gunn had a feeling that he was being watched on every step. What

he had to do was to resume his life as usual and do not set off alarm bells.

Thirdly, unusual things happened in his office.

This incident had him to find out what had actually happened. Either it was the lost pen, or the missing patient files which Nong complained they couldn't be found in the last few days; including the drawers that Gunn was certain they were ransacked. He didn't know whether this suspicion held enough ground to ask for recorded footages from the CCTV cameras near the office.



"The nearest cameras face towards the front of the building where most of the patients lived, Doc. If someone comes from the back, we won't be able to see him. And most of the staff like to use the backdoor." The security guard pointed at the image on the screen. "I've rewound the footages like you asked, but I didn't find anything unusual."

"That's because it doesn't face my office at all." Gunn massaged his eyebrows. He couldn't even see himself go in and out of his office with this camera.

"The public hospital's budget is limited. You should've understood, Doc." Yongyuth, the young security guard, who was sitting on the chair turned to look at Gunn. "If I have enough time, I'll check the cameras in this area for you. I'll tell you if I find anything wrong."

"Thank you." Gunn walked out of the security guard's room. He was pondering the clues he had. He must figure out who rummaged through his office and find out why. Gunn felt insecure as this incident had happened without him being aware of. He chose to start with the only clue he knew; Tum, the male nurse.



'I'm positive my office was searched.'

Wasan read the latest Line message Gunn sent to him. He scolded himself for the millionth time for not being able to block and erase this man's contact permanently. The bond between him and Gunn could explain Wasan's strange behavior, but he didn't want to accept it.

'Nothing was missing except the pen.'

'But lots of my belongings didn't seem to be in their places.'

Wasan immediately sat up straight, making an officer sitting across from him startle. He quickly unlocked his phone, opened the message and replied back.

'The golden pen?'

'Yes. The one you've probably seen.'

'When did it disappear?'

'Last week.'

Wasan raised his hand, touching his shirt pocket impulsively. The object which Gunn declared had disappeared was here. Wasan was about to call Gunn, but someone walked in to report something. So, he could only send a message, saying, 'I've to work now. I'll call you back.'

'Okay.'

'Wasan.'

'Miss you most in the world.'

Wasan quickly flipped the phone over his desk to hide its screen. He looked up and smiled at the complainant sitting in front of him to hide his expression that came with goosebumps feeling. Usually, he didn't smile in this strange manner. But, it's okay since this person had never known him before. "How can I help you?"



The consistent sound of the shoes tapping against the pavement in the park was heard for forty minutes. Wasan changed from running to walking while lifting the hem of his sport shirt to wipe off the sweat on his forehead. He looked up at the sky that was getting dark. For Wasan, running wasn't just a way to stay in good shape, but also a way to get rid of his stress. He channeled his

stress to concentrate on the footsteps, breathing, heart rate, and the changing atmosphere every step he took.

"People will take a peek if you lift your shirt like that." A familiar voice rang out from behind. Wasan took a glimpse before turning back to stretch his calf muscles.

"Only you would've such a dirty mind."

"How can you know I've a dirty mind? I might not have thought of anything." Gunn sat on the bench. His eyes fixed on the sculpted and toned body in the sport shirt and running shorts.

"No way."

"That means you know me well." Gunn lifted a bottle of cold water over his shoulder. "Wasan, catch."

Wasan turned around to grab the bottle of water the other man precisely threw to him. The way he caught the bottle seemed very cool in Gunn's eyes. "Thanks."

At dusk, the two men walked side by side in the park. At this time, the weather was damp and hot as if the heavy air was forming a rainstorm in a few moments. Their surrounding was peaceful with only a handful of people passing by. "Tell me more about your rummaged office," Wasan asked.

"There's no obvious evidence, but I noticed that lots of stuff in my office were relocated during this time. I wasn't sure at first, but this morning, my sentimental object wasn't supposed to be where it has always been."

"What's gone missing?"

"Nothing but the pen." Gunn pulled Wasan's arm to avoid a hole on the pavement. "I didn't worry about the pen as much as being searched. I don't know who did it and why. If that person actually came in to steal something, it shouldn't be just the pen that disappeared. There are other valuables to pick. But I couldn't find the robber because there's no camera facing my new office."

Wasan went silent with a thoughtful expression. "Are you sure you didn't accidentally drop it somewhere. A forgetful man like you might probably forget it somewhere you've visited."

Gunn shook his head. "I'm quite certain that I put it on the desk. Or did the police send someone to search my office for evidence?"

"We don't do that sort of thing." Wasan stroked his chin. Gunn might not know that now the pen was found in a strange place. "When did the pen go missing?"

"The morning after I drank with you."

Wasan pondered after hearing Gunn's words. That evening was the day Mrs. Urai passed away. His head was throbbing from using his thought. Each clue tightened together like his eyebrows. If what Gunn said was true, it meant that he might not be the one who dropped the pen there.

Wasan had two choices: believe or don't believe.

Well, the risk must be taken. Otherwise, nothing would progress. He hoped that his decision would be the smartest one.

He stopped walking, took Gunn's hand and made the man turning to face him. Wasan pulled out the golden pen from his pocket, placing it on Gunn's hand. His eyes slightly turned wide before looking up at Wasan with a shocked expression. "Did I forget it at your house? But I'm confident that I used it the next morning..."

"The pen was found near the house of the patient who died from cancer on Wednesday night. The daughter-in-law of the deceased just found it yesterday. She brought it to me because she thought it's expensive." Wasan observed the other man's reaction closely. He saw only an expression of shock and surprise.

"What was the patient's name?"

"Her name was Urai."

Gunn closed his eyes, "Mrs. Urai, a patient with terminal ovarian cancer."

"Have you ever visited the patient?"

"I had made an appointment to visit her, but she passed away before the appointment date." He held the pen tightly. "Someone intentionally made it look like I was there when the patient died. And before that, someone deliberately put my name on Pharmacist Boze's suicide note." Gunn looked angry.

"Wasan, I think I'm being staged as if I am involved in the deaths of every patient."

Chapter Seventeen

Doubts

"Uh oh, where are you going in the middle of the night, Mr. Handsome Doctor?" Kong pulled a toothpick from his mouth, throwing it off the window of a black car parked in the darkness. His sharp eyes stared from under the black cap to the large bronze car which was driven out of the housing estate. He considered himself lucky to be the one who saw Dr. Gunn's movement. Kong and the investigation team had been taking turn to observe Gunn's movement at night for a while.

Although the information gathered by Tum wasn't a piece of evidence that directly pointed to Gunn, however, at least he knew that the Doctor took an interest in the study of forensic science and toxicology, even if the topics weren't related to his specialist field. Kong knew that it wasn't something unusual that physicians would take an interest in other fields. However, in this case, Gunn was the suspect of killing Pharmacist Boze and was accused of being a role model in giving a lethal injection to the patients, Kong would buy this tiny observational detail for now.

"If you're not going to see your boyfriend, then you must be strolling out to kill someone." Kong hummed while starting the engine. He carefully followed the bronze car from a safe distance. In such a small quiet province, it was easy to notice when someone tried to follow your car. So, Kong must be extremely careful not to alert the man in the car in front of him.

That car drove towards downtown, passing restaurants and night market areas before turning right. Kong followed him until he

saw the car turned into the hospital. He couldn't drive into the area reserved only for the hospital staff. As a result, he turned his car to the parking lot for visitors and sneaked into the hospital building through the back entrance.

He knew the way around like the back of his hand.

Kong saw Gunn's car light while he parked the vehicle in the parking lot in front of the hospital staff residence. The Doctor's tall body came out of the car and walked towards the staff residence, upstairs to the second floor. Kong kept watching whose room Gunn was heading to.

So, Gunn was cheating on Wasan with another man.

This might be a piece of new interesting information he was going to get.

Poor Inspector!

But then, Kong's heart almost stopped beating when he saw the person who opened the door. "Shit..."



The male nurse in pajamas looked up at the visitor with panicked eyes. The tall man who was standing before him was the man whose desk had been ransacked by him.

The only reason Gunn came here must be that he already knew that Tum was the culprit who came into his office and rummaged through his desk. Gunn's pressuring gaze confirmed what Tum feared. "P...Professor...what are you doing here?"

"When you ask Ms. Nong for the key to Pali office, did you touch anything on my desk? "

Tum tried to act normal though his heart was almost jumping out of his chest. "I just went back to retrieve my phone in the restroom, Professor."

Tum thought that he couldn't conceal his frightened eyes. That's why Gunn looked unsatisfied. "Tell me, did someone order you to do that, or you did it because of your free will?"

"I didn't search through your desk, I swear!" His voice trembled. In Dr. Gunn's eyes, his credibility must be downright low.

"Hey, you must understand me," Gunn's cool and calm demeanor vanished. "My office was searched. And my stuff was left where it didn't belong in order to slander me as a murderer. I almost went to jail without committing a crime. Now, I want to know who did that and why." Gunn squeezed Tum's shoulders so hard that he grimaced. "Tell me now who ordered you to do that, and I won't pursue a charge against you."

"Let him go." Gunn swiftly released Tum and turned around when he heard a deep raspy voice. In a dark corner, the man in a black leather jacket wearing a black cap was standing with his hands in his pockets. He stared at them with a cold gaze. Gunn frowned as he had a feeling that this man might be the same person Wasan met at that bar and restaurant. Gunn wasn't aware of how long the man had been standing there.

Tum widened his eyes and turned to look at the guy. He was about to call that man but then decided to keep his mouth shut. He retreated into his room for safety and prepared to run if the men got into a fight.

"Thank you for your cooperation. I don't want to handcuff anyone while I'm off duty." The man strode out of the shadow. He removed his cap, revealing the cropped-short hairstyle, the same hairstyle Wasan had.

Gunn took a deep breath, turning to face the man.

The man who came with the shadow smiled broadly. "I'm Police Sub-Lieutenant Archa. Everyone calls me Lieutenant Kong. I worked with Inspector Wasan. Nice to meet you." The man pointed his finger to Tum's door. "That guy is my minion. I don't like it when another man knocks on his door at night like this."

Gunn clenched his fist and loosened it to calm himself. "I beg your pardon."

Kong gestured his hand towards the stairs. "This way. Please leave. Do not knock on the door of other people's boyfriends or I'll do the same with your man."

Kong saw the fire of rage erupted in Gunn's eyes. Fortunately, Gunn was able to control it well. He chose not to say anything, but walking towards the stairs and quickly descended from the second

floor instead. Kong put on his cap again and walked straight to Tum, who was leaning against the door frame as if his strength had disappeared.

"Unbelievable that you said something like that, Lieutenant." Tum expressed his dissatisfaction.

"I have no choice," Kong smacked his lips. "Do you want me to tell him I've been following him from his house? I came to see you in this place; it's most reasonable to tell him that I'm your boyfriend."

"You didn't have to help."

"How can I not help? Or do you want me to let you get killed in front of me?" Kong raised his elbow and leaned it against the door frame above Tum's head. "He's the suspect of killing Pharmacist Boze. He might've been the one who hanged that big guy. The tiny man like you would probably get hung around like a sandbag."

"Hey!" Tum backed away from Kong as far as possible. "You can go back now. I thought you said the two of us would pretend like we don't know each other."

"I'm a police officer. I've to do my job when I see people in danger." Kong deliberately stepped into the room and closed the door. He looked at Tum's uniform on the bed, which would be used when Tum went to do his night shift in the next two hours. "I'll stay with you until it's time for your night shift. The Doctor might return to do something else to you."

"That's because you forced me to do that stupid thing, Lieutenant!"

"Well, I took my responsibility by pretending to be your fake boyfriend." Kong shrugged his shoulder.

"Who's your boyfriend!?"

"You. And anyone who dares attacking the officer's boyfriend is an idiot."

Tum wore an uncomfortable expression, watching Kong make himself at home by pulling a chair to sit crossing his legs comfortably. The man deliberately snatched Tum's book from his desk to read.

Tum sighed loudly. Even though he wanted to throw this person out of his room, his fear for the return of Dr. Gunn was greater. Tum reluctantly let Lieutenant Kong stay in his place. He

grabbed his working uniform on the bed, walked into the bathroom, and slammed the door shut with a loud bang, delivering his unwillingness to let another person stay in his room.



Gunn drove out of the hospital with fuming anger. He knew that he shouldn't confront Tum in the middle of the night; however, his restlessness made him unable to stay calm and do nothing. He didn't obey Wasan who wanted him to pretend like he was unaware that his office was ransacked. Gunn thought that the more he let time pass, the more he seemed suspicious in other people's eyes.

He was becoming a real criminal.

Gunn might not be able to defend himself any longer. He must find the culprit as soon as possible.

He went straight to Wasan's house. Wasan in pajamas opened the gate, one hand holding his phone with a shocked expression.

"What are you doing here?" Wasan frowned.

"I'll take you to my house." Gunn pointed to his car. "Please, I'm very nervous right now. I need you."

"What?" Wasan didn't know how to react.

"Please, Wasan. Please."

It was the first time he saw Gunn's pleading eyes. Wasan opened his mouth and closed it. He went silent for a moment before heaving out a loud breath. If people's heart could melt, it would be just like his in this moment. "Turn off the engine and come inside. Let me prepare my stuff."

Ten minutes later, Wasan slid into the passenger seat. Everything just happened out of the blue. He glanced at Gunn, who looked agitated more than ever. "What happened?"

"I've something to confess."

"What?"

"I just went to see the person whom I suspected of searching my office."

Wasan was stunned for a while before balling his fist and punched Gunn on his shoulder, hard enough to make the man jump. "Was it too hard to understand!? I said, don't do anything just yet! You're being watched on every move you take. You said you don't want to get more suspicious. If you don't listen to what I said, then don't ask for my opinion!"

Gunn inhaled through his mouth. "I knew I'd be scolded big time."

Tired of the guy beside him, Wasan could produce many curse words, but chose to keep them silent because it was no use to do so. "Well, did you get anything out of it?"

"Nothing. His boyfriend came back just in time and saw me." Gunn pushed the turn signal, then turning to the main road. "Police Sub-Lieutenant Archa, do you know this name?"

Wasan's eyes widened. "Lieutenant Kong?"

"That's the boyfriend of the man I just confronted." Gunn leaned his head against the headrest limply.

"He's dating the male nurse? It shouldn't be possible." Lieutenant Kong's disdain gaze for Wasan's sexual orientation still deeply rooted inside Wasan's mind. "And then what?"

"Then I rushed out of there. Nothing else happened. It's so stressful, so I want to see you." Gunn was quiet for a moment. "Do you think that police officer ordered the nurse to search my desk?"

"Don't jump to any conclusion just yet. I'll try to get the information from Lieutenant Kong."

"Or is it that the police are hungry for their prizes, so they forged false evidences to frame me to get my conviction."

"Gunn!" He was scolded for a second time. "Stop panicking and listening to me. No police would want to defame you. I'll take care of Lieutenant Kong myself. You do nothing. Just keep a low profile. You work and then go home, like other people do. Don't run around, looking for evidence by yourself, got it?"

Gunn went silent, looking the other way.

"Say yes, Doctor! Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir." Gunn replied quietly.

Wasan knew that he couldn't control a man like Gunn. So, he had no choice but to act tough and be strict.

This was the first time Wasan got to see Dr. Gunn's house in a housing estate on the outskirts. The house's beauty and grandeur were suitable for his status. Wasan stood looking at the two-story house under a dim light. He was positive that, in the daytime, this house must be even more beautiful to behold. "Why do you decide to take me here just now?"

"It was inconvenient. I've renovated a car-park roof, having the fences and the living room painted." Gunn pointed at the car-park roof. "I thought you might be allergic to the dust and find the new paint smell unpleasant, but everything is okay now. So, I take you here."

"Ah," It sounded reasonable. He could smell the light fresh paint coming from the fences.

"Are you upset I didn't take you home earlier?"

"Who is upset?"

Wasan walked ahead and waited in front of the glass door. Gunn smiled slightly and followed Wasan to unlock the house.



Even if they had an opportunity to sleep in the same bed together, Wasan was too tired from his previous double night shift. Not to mention Gunn, who seemed to be more frustrated than usual. Each of them didn't want to do anything sexy, so they hurriedly took a shower and laid down on a king size bed.

Gunn embraced Wasan from behind, using him as a bolster. The warmth from Gunn's body was so warm and cozy; however, Wasan couldn't let himself enjoy this feeling for too long. This was an opportunity he had been waiting for. It was the opportunity for him to learn more about the other man. He closed his eyes, waiting for some time to make sure that Gunn was already sound asleep. Soon enough, Gunn's breathing was deep, slow and steady. Wasan carefully turned to look at his partner, slowly removed Gunn's arm from his body, and got up from bed.

Wasan turned on the flashlight from his phone and began exploring the area outside of the house. There was nothing but trees and gardening tools in the storage near the garage. After that, he walked into the living room, flashing the light up to see the items in the showcase. Nothing really stood out, except the photos of Gunn in his graduation gown, his Outstanding Physician Certificate, and souvenirs—probably from his role as a guest speaker for many organizations. In the kitchen, there wasn't much to explore. Wasan walked further to a storage room in the back, which was full of empty boxes, old appliances, and plastic boxes contained of uninteresting things.

There were two bedrooms in this house. One was a guest room, which might be the one Gunn's family stayed whenever they visited him. The other room was a master bedroom which Gunn normally slept in, and Wasan guessed that Gunn kept most of his stuff in this room. So, he had to search with extreme caution.

Wasan quietly pushed the door that was left slightly open, seeing Gunn's tall body was still sleeping in the same position.

He took a deep breath and quietly opened a drawer under the television. There was a charger, an earphone, and Dr. Gunn's hospital employee card inside. In the second drawer, there were two medical textbooks and a gold necklace. Wasan looked up to see a picture in a frame on top of the drawer. It was the picture of a boy and someone who should be his mother. The boy must be the young Guntapat. Wasan recalled that on the night he went out to drink with him, Gunn didn't talk about his mother at all.

The sound of the man turning himself over on the bed made Wasan startle. He glanced back at Gunn, who was now lying on his side, unmoving, facing the front of the house. Wasan opened a wardrobe, rummaging through the corners that might be the place to hide something, and then searched through Gunn's clean bathroom, which contained no more than necessary supplies.

Wasan returned to the bed, trying not to wake up the other man. He laid on his back, looking up at the dimly-lit ceiling. On one hand, he was still worried; on the other hand, he was relieved that he

couldn't find anything suspicious in this house. Wasan closed his eyes, finally letting himself fall asleep.

With his back facing Wasan, Gunn opened his eyes, staring out of the window with an unreadable expression.

Chapter Eighteen

The Second Murder

'But what I want is to spend the rest of my life with you. I want to get up in the morning with you. Sleep next to you. Make love to you. Hold you in my arms. Take good care of you. And I want to have you in every important occasion in my life, to be my support, to be the most important person for me.'

It was not that Wasan didn't want that.

He watched Gunn's car drive away after dropping him off at his brother's house in the early morning. Wasan turned to see that his sister-in-law was watering the plants and looking at him.

"Where did you go, Wasan?" Gai asked.

"I..." Of course, he shouldn't tell her the truth. "Went out to drink with my friends."

Gai nodded slowly as if she was still doubtful, but she didn't ask him further, and then turned back to the trees.

Wasan walked into his house to gather the stuff and head off to work. Wasan had to go to the court early; and he only had time to ask Gunn to buy Chinese buns from the convenience store for him before he won't be able to eat anything for a long period of time.



"Dr. Gunn." Yongyuth, the security guard, poked his head into Gunn's examination room while he was prescribing painkillers for a cancer patient in front of him. "When you're free,

could you please come to my office? It's about your request to check the footage."

"Oh." Gunn sat up straight. "I still have patients at this moment, but I'll hurry and finish the checkup before four. Please wait for me. I'll come to you as soon as my duty's done ."

"Of course," Yongyuth bowed and walked away.

He didn't know whether he imagined it himself, but the security guard seemed worried.

Gunn offered his smile to the patient as an apology for the interruption. He then promptly typed the medicine prescription into the computer.

It appeared that Gunn spent time talking to his patient longer than he had expected. He left the examination room at 4.15 p.m. and rushed to the CCTV monitoring room where he requested to see the footage of the camera on the day he suspected that his office had been ransacked. Yongyuth must have found something unusual after rewinding the footage. That's why he came to him earlier. The light of hope gleamed in Gunn's heart. This time, he would know the man who was trying to frame him.

Gunn entered the security guard's office. But no one was there, only desks and screens showing places. He let out a long sigh to vent his frustration. Yongyuth might have some other missions or was out of his shift already. It was his fault that he let him wait for too long. He left the guard's office and walked towards another security guard who was controlling traffic in front of the building.

"Excuse me, have you seen Yongyuth?" Guntapat asked.

"He's already off his shift. But I saw him waiting for you in his office about an hour ago."

"I went inside and didn't see anyone there..."

"You might want to check on him again. He might go to restroom or something like that."

Gunn went back there for a second time. But the room was still empty. He decided to sit down on the chair and wait. He looked at the screens, thinking that he might find the person whom he had been waiting.

Twenty minutes later, he looked at his watch anxiously. The guy who was already off his duty shouldn't have any mission left. Yongyuth might have waited for Gunn so long that he went back home. So, he decided to ask for Yongyuth's phone number from the security guard at the parking lot. Gunn called Yongyuth, hoping to make an appointment with him tomorrow, so that they wouldn't miss each other again.

However, Yongyuth didn't answer the call.

Gunn didn't know Yongyuth saw something unusual on which camera or at what exact minutes. That's why he couldn't ask other guards to turn them on for him. From what other people told him, Yongyuth didn't tell anyone what he had found on the CCTV footages. So, Gunn told himself to keep calm, and that he could come back here again tomorrow when Yongyuth got back. After that realization, Gunn walked back into the building and went to the Surgery Department to see the patients remaining from this morning. He needed to clear all of his consultation cases today because he had to go out to the community all day tomorrow.



"What's wrong with this month?"

The exclamation from one of the police officers woke Bunnakit from his reverie. Under the hot sunlight, the heat wave from the ground mixed with the scene in front of him made the forensic pathologist momentarily feel dizzy. He didn't fear what he saw, but Bunnakit was more frightened of the strange incident in this place.

This is the second time that the hospital staff died in the hospital area.

"The decedent is Mr. Yongyuth Theera, 30 years old, a hospital employee in a security guard position," Pol. Maj. Wasan spoke while wiping the sweat under his hat that was a result of the midday glare of the sun. "Was seen alive at 4 p.m. yesterday by his colleagues. The decedent's wallet and phone were gone."

"It feels like someone is throwing a farewell party for me," Dr. Bunnakit grumbled. Wasan turned to look at the pathologist, giving

him a sympathetic look.

"And my welcome party too, not a day goes by without urgent cases." Wasan sighed and continued, "The body was found at 10 a.m. by Mr. Wichian, while he's sorting waste materials. He said he heard a dog barking nonstop near the tall grasses, behind the fences between the parking lot and the empty space behind the hospital main building. So, he curiously went to look and found the body, in the same position we found, before he rushed back to tell the guard around the area."

Bunnakit looked around. Due to the indefinite postponement of medical ward construction project, this plot of empty land was neglected until all the trees and weeds stood tall. Many people didn't even know that this land belonged to the hospital because of the fences that divided the area, and not so many people walked in and out of this place.

The deceased wore a security guard uniform, lying face down in the grasses. At the back of his head was a large scary wound caused by a violent battery from a solid object. The dark blood had flowed from his head, spread on the ground and stained the green grasses. The end of the body's limbs became white as a paper. The smell of blood that fumed in the air by the heat of sunlight was so intolerable to many people.

Bunnakit put on the gloves that Anun handed to him. He went closer to the body and swatted off flies that swarmed on the wound where he wanted to examine.

"The primary cause of death probably comes from head concussion. He died at least 18 hours but less than 24 hours. However, in this heat, the estimated time of death might be inaccurate." Bunnakit said after he finished examining the body. "I want the body to be sent to the Forensic Department for further autopsy."

Wasan nodded. "Understood."

He glanced at the hospital main building. Wasan didn't know whether Gunn had already known about the news because he didn't send any message to him since last night.

"Inspector, can I talk to you?" Sergeant Narong came up to Wasan with a grave expression. Both of them walked away from the crowd, allowing Dr. Bunnakit to conveniently perform the postmortem on the body.

"What is it, Sergeant?"

"I asked Yongyuth's colleague, who was on a shift after him. He said that someone asked for the decedent around 4.30 p.m. yesterday."

"Who?"

Narong pressed his lips together and then sighed. He stared at Wasan as if he was hesitating to tell him, but he eventually spoke. "The same name, the one and only, Dr. Guntapat, sir."

Wasan was stunned for quite some time before he shut his eyes tightly and turned the other way. He raised his hands to massage his knitted eyebrows. Narong could easily understand what it meant. "Why did he ask for the decedent?"

"He said that earlier, Dr. Gunn had asked Yongyuth to monitor the CCTV footages for him. Then, yesterday, Yongyuth had waited to see Dr. Gunn as he might find something unusual on them, but then Yongyuth had disappeared. I understand that he's off his duty before Dr. Gunn came to ask for him."

"What did Gunn do during that time?" Wasan knew that Sergeant Narong wouldn't be able to answer this question. He turned to look at Narong with a serious expression. "If that is the case, we definitely have to summon Guntapat for an interrogation. However, when other officers knew that he was involved in this case, he would be naturally linked with the previous one, and I'll be undoubtedly off this case. I need more time to thoroughly gather information from witnesses myself while the case is still in my responsibility. Can you turn a blind eye on this until the evening?"

Sergeant Narong nodded. "I do understand you, Inspector."

Wasan expressed his gratitude through his eyes. "Sergeant, no need to worry. I'm a guardian of justice, and I want to catch the murderer just like others." After saying that, Wasan entrusted Narong to watch over the crime scene, and he then rushed to interrogate the witnesses in the hospital himself with a great speed.



The incident sparked a lot of panic among the hospital staff that the Hospital Director couldn't maintain his composure. He called for an urgent meeting for representatives of each department to explain the situation and allow the attendees to make inquiries. Somsak looked at the attendees with a grave expression.

"Professor Somsak, may I speak frankly." Mrs. Areeya, the head nurse of the Male Surgery Department, raised her hand. "Right now, we couldn't concentrate on any assignment because we don't feel safe at all. Two staff were killed in the hospital area in the same month. This is too much, and they still couldn't catch the killer. You should've better countermeasures against this kind of thing, Professor."

"The police are trying their best to catch the culprit." Somsak replied calmly. "I'll increase hospital security procedures. Moreover, during this time, the police will also patrol our hospital. So, you don't have to worry. If the police ask for any cooperation or if you see something strange, I want everyone to do your best to help them out."

"What about a bunch of reporters outside? How should we deal with them, Director?"

"Tell them to get the information from me only. Do not get involved in answering what you don't really know; the situation might get out of hand and destroy the hospital's reputation."

A middle-aged pharmacist raised his hand. "Is the suspect in this case Dr. Guntapat again?"

Loud chatters could be heard in the meeting room. Somsak gazed at the person who asked the question and was silent for a moment before slightly letting out his breath. "I don't have this information. I want everyone not to jump to any conclusion until we have a clearer piece of evidence."

With a tired body and weary mind, Somsak walked out of the meeting room. He absent-mindedly looked out at the parking lot in front of the hospital, where there were full of the reporters' cars from

reputable news agencies. For over twenty years he had been a public servant, the previous year was the most chaotic year full of unexpected incidents. The small, quiet provincial hospital was put on the spotlight for the whole country.

Somsak needed to put everything in order before the hospital's reputation would be utterly destroyed by this chaos.



Gunn came out of the elevator and walked towards the Director's office on the fifth floor. He raised his hand to wipe off the sweat drenched on his face due to the heat. Somsak suddenly summoned him back despite him being with the patients. Gunn had to tell his twenty patients to wait at RPHPH, if they could, or they could make new appointments with the nurse.

When Gunn opened the door, the tall, middle-aged man with a good personality was sitting at the desk, waiting for him. He stared at Gunn's face through his glasses.

Gunn greeted the senior physician before him. "Why did you call me back, Professor?"

"Please sit down," Somsak gestured to a chair opposite his desk. Gunn slowly lowered himself on the chair. "You have already known that they found our security guard's body?"

"Yes, I know. But I've nothing to do with..."

"Of course, you have. Why haven't you? Yesterday, in the evening, why did you ask for the deceased, Dr. Gunn?"

The air around Gunn grew heavy because of the questions. He showed a terrifying expression at first, and then his face became emotionless to hide his other feelings. "I'm not involved in his death, but I don't deny that I did go to see Yongyuth. He was the person I asked to rewind the footages of CCTV cameras located nearest to my office because I suspected that my office was rummaged."

"Rummaged?" Somsak frowned. "Why don't you come to tell me first?"

"Because no valuables was missing. Only the documents that seemed to be moved, so I suspected it. If the camera recorded

something unusual, I'd have taken it to the police and then report it to you, Professor. If I'd told you that without proof, you would say my suspicion held no valid ground."

"Actually, you should have told me no matter what had happened. Why don't you let me handle it?" Somsak said with a harsher tone of voice. He got up and walked around the desk to stand towering above Gunn. "All of your actions these days had caused the hospital staff to panic. Do you know that!"

"I just wanted to find the person who searched my office. Was I wrong?" Gunn drew himself up to his full height, facing the senior physician without fear. "I apologize for not telling you about this, Director, but I insist that I definitely have nothing to do with this."

On Somsak's face was an expression of unpleasantness. "And what information did you get from the CCTV?"

"None," He replied with a flat tone. "Because Yongyuth died before he could tell me."

Somsak sighed. He still had an unpleasant expression on his face. However, as the hospital executive, Somsak had to try hard to control himself. "As I've said, regardless of what happens, you must do your best to cooperate with the police. If you suspect anything or want to deal with any personnel in my hospital, you've to tell me first, every time. This is an order. If I see you not asking for my permission the next time, you might have to kiss your job goodbye, Doctor."

Gunn walked down the building with the boiling rage after his battle with Somsak. His mind kept dwelling in the incident. He stopped walking when he reached the final steps. He turned to look at his back with the ice-cold gaze.



"Okay, I think I've got enough information." Wasan looked at Sergeant Narong. "I'll summon Guntapat for interrogation at the police station by myself. If I couldn't summon him, then we'd issue a subpoena."

"Understood, Inspector." Narong nodded. "Then, I'll head back to the police station first."

Wasan walked out of the main room of the security guard's office and called Gunn. If Wasan wasn't mistaken, Gunn would be on duty at the RPHPH today. Wasan waited for only few minutes before his call was answered. "Yes, Wasan."

"Where are you?"

"Director Somsak called me back to talk. Now, I'm at the hospital."
"

"You already knew about it, right?" Wasan asked with a low but intense voice. "Do you realize what you've done? How many times have I told you to stay still? "

"I tried to meet with Yongyuth because I just want to see the CCTV footages and find out who rummaged through my office, that's all. And he seemed to find something unusual." Wasan heard the man on the line letting out a sigh. "Wasan, listen to me. All that happened isn't normal. Can't you feel the intention to make me the scapegoat? The key is the person who searched my office."

"Keep this information to yourself and talk in the police station, Gunn." Wasan spoke with the more serious tone. "I'm speaking as an Investigator. Please go to the police station for interrogation now."

"Are you going to interrogate me yourself?"

"Yes. You and I would probably have this one chance. So, if you have something to tell me, tell me all of it. Do not lie. Do not try to hide it. Do not use our special bond to give yourself advantages because when we meet at the police station, I'll be the police officer who has never known you." He paused for a moment. "Please, Gunn, tell me the truth. Because that's the best way I can help you."

Chapter Nineteen

All At Sea

"Wow, there are many journalists today." A familiar voice made Tum, who was getting off his morning shift, jump in the air. With dissatisfaction, he turned to look at the black cap man who usually swerved like a ghost.

"When will you leave me alone, Lieutenant Kong?"

"I should've put on something nicer. In case I could get on TV." Not only Kong didn't answer Tum's question, he also took off his cap, pretending to stroke his cropped-short hair.

Tum narrowed his eyes at the man who pretended to be oblivious before he turned around and continued walking obliquely.

"Hey, you're not gonna thank me?"

"What do I've to thank you for?"

"What? I helped you from Dr. Gunn." Kong came to walk alongside Tum who was frowning. "His name appears on the security guard's death. It looks like he's the person who asked for the decedent yesterday. Scary, right? How can I leave you with a guy who is surrounded by death?"

"Hey!" Tum stopped walking and turned to face with Kong, who usually wasn't wearing his uniform. "Just a thank you, and then we're done, correct? Thank you for coming to rescue me, okay? And from now on, please keep your promise that the two of us will act as if we've never known each other. "

"Be careful. If Dr. Gunn knows it's you who searched his office, you'd disappear too."

"Then before I die, I'll implicate you too, and we both would die together." Tum ironically bit back. "You don't have to help me from now on. Good day."

"Wait." Lieutenant Kong's tough hand grabbed Tum's arm. "Let's have breakfast together."

Tum's eyes grew big, trying to draw back his arms to no avail. People who were walking by started to look in their way. "Lieutenant Kong! Let go!"

"I'll take you somewhere nice in Chiang Mai."

"What else do you want from me? I won't do it!"

"Can't I just bring you for a date and not asking you for any help?" Kong smiled deviously from the corner of his mouth.

Tum gasped. He was about to let out a series of curses, but luckily, Lieutenant's phone began ringing.

Lieutenant Kong clicked his tongue annoyingly and released Tum's arm before answering his phone. "Yes, sir."

Tum sighed in relief, preparing to walk away.

"Right now, sir? Oh...interesting...yes, yes. I'll return to the police station." Kong hung up the phone and followed Tum. "You get away this time. We're about to have something fun at the police station. I need to go back."

"Then go away."

"Inspector Wasan, who is responsible for the security guard's death case, summoned Dr. Guntapat, his boyfriend, to interrogate by himself. I wanna know how they'll get away with this." Kong moved his face closer. "I'm terribly sorry, Love. I can't miss this. Our date has to wait."

Tum was about to berate the man, who was hard to remove from his life more than chewing gum under his shoes, but the lieutenant had quickly disappeared into the crowd.



The whirling sound of the overhead fan was the loudest sound in the room. Sat inside were Inspector Wasan, Lieutenant Gawin, and Dr. Guntapat, who was sitting in the middle of the

room. The roles between Wasan and Guntapat had changed from confidants to a cop and a key witness, and Wasan must get information from him as much as possible. Wasan clasped his hands together on the table while looking at the man before him, sitting still.

"Mr. Guntapat"

Guntapat raised his eyebrows with a surprise that Wasan had called him casually. "Yes."

"Yesterday, about 4.30 p.m., you went to find Mr. Yongyuth, is it true?"

"It's true," Gunn replied, without hesitation. "Three days ago, I asked Yongyuth to rewind the footages of CCTV cameras closest to my office. As Ornanong and I noticed that the things in my office were strangely relocated. I want to make sure that we didn't imagine it ourselves, so I went to request for the footages."

"Did you get what you had asked?"

He shook his head. "The first day I went to him, he showed me the footages roughly, and we saw nothing unusual. But yesterday, around 3 p.m., Yongyuth came to see me in the examination room. Looks like he wanted me to know something, but I had many patients awaiting. I was concerned that I wouldn't finish examining them before the end of working hours, so I told him that I'd catch up with him after I'd done with all the patients. That's the last time I saw him."

Wasan nodded, writing down Gunn's testimony on a paper, which was consistent with the information from the nurse who worked in front of Gunn's examination room. "When did you finish examining the patients?"

"I finished the checking around 4.15 p.m. Then, I rushed to see him at his office, but he wasn't there. So, I went to see the other guard who was in the parking lot. I asked him for Yongyuth's number. Called him once. But he didn't pick up. I thought he might've gone off duty, so I decided that I'd come again today."

"Where did you go after that?"

"I went back to give consultation to the remaining patients. I stayed at the Surgery Department until 5 p.m. and at the ICU Medicine until 5.30. After that, I returned to my office, drawing the

project with Ornanong till 6. Then, I went out to have dinner with my colleagues. We finished around 8 and went home."

Wasan glanced up at Gunn. "Who were those friends?"

"Dr. Karnrawee, an obstetrician, and Dr. Manop, a surgeon. There were three of us." Since the beginning, Gunn had never shown any hesitation. "So, there're witnesses who saw that I wasn't alone until 8 p.m. After 8, I drove home. You can check on the CCTV of my estate, Wasan...I mean, Inspector."

"Do you and the deceased know each other well?"

"He walked past me sometimes, and also directed my car occasionally. I only said hi to him out of courtesy, but we've never contacted each other personally. The CCTV issue was the first time I had really spoken to him."

"Do you know if the decedent had a conflict with anyone?"

He shook his head. "We barely knew each other. I didn't know if he'd been in a fight with anyone."

Wasan nodded, putting down his pen with an emotionless face. Many people might not know what Wasan felt, but Gunn know that he felt relieved. That's because his testimony didn't contradict with the information from other pieces of evidence in Wasan's hands. Gunn unconsciously smiled at the man before him as an encouragement, and he saw Wasan smile back at him just for a millisecond.

"Can I ask you something, Inspector?" Gunn asked.

"What?"

"Have you checked the CCTV? I want to know what Yongyuth had found on the footages."

Wasan sighed, intertwining his hands back on the table. "All information on the camera's hard disk was completely erased and the cameras were disabled."

Gunn was slightly stunned. He leaned against the chair with a thoughtful expression. "It's erased, you say? There're only a few people in this hospital who could wipe all the information and disable the cameras."

"And it'll be our duty to investigate further into this." Wasan stood up. "Thank you for your cooperation. You can go back now."

Gunn nodded as a farewell and smiled at Wasan again before getting to his feet, walking to the door and leave the room.



“Lieutenant Guin!”

The voice from the corner of the stairs made the officer who was walking through the corridors startle that he almost dropped the laptop he was holding on the ground. Gawin turned around with an unimpressed expression. “Holy fuck! You frightened me again, Kong! When will you stop acting like a ghost?”

“Lieutenant Guin, where are you going?” The Investigation Officer, who was called ‘ghost,’ walked towards Gawin with his hands in his pockets. Kong raised his eyebrows, intentionally trying to get on Gawin’s nerves.

“I’m taking the laptop to my desk.” Gawin narrowed his eyes. “And stop calling me ‘Guin.’ I’m not fucking idiot penguin.”

“Your first name isn’t easy to call. So, I shorten for you as a favor. Gawin with two syllables becomes Guin in one syllable, alright? Hey, my dear friend, hold on a minute. Hold on.” Kong ran to block Gawin’s path, although he could see that Gawin was so fed up with him. “How did the interrogation go?”

“It went very smooth. I must say that even though they had prepped each other, it couldn’t be this smooth. That room still reeked with the smell of love.” Gawin shook his head. “Inspector won’t be allowed to do this case further, believe me.”

“Well, you see, two men in love,” Kong chuckled. “Let him go. If the Doctor isn’t the culprit, then go ahead and be together as long as they want, but if the Doctor is the murderer...we shall see whether our Inspector would be a true cop or the cop who falls in love with a murderer and mistakes bad for good.”

With disgust, Gawin looked at the man who invented fancy words as if it came out from some poems, “You came back just to nosy around, huh? Stop babbling and go back home to sleep.”

“Hey, hold on a second. One more question.” Kong grabbed Lieutenant Gawin's shoulder, not allowing him to walk away. “Is your

wife a nurse?"

"Yeah, my wife is a nurse. Why?" Gawin raised his eyebrows.

"Are they nurses...fond of men like you?" Kong smiled broadly.
"Could they be fond of someone like me?"

"Let's find someone who doesn't hate you first, and then you can ask me." Gawin dodged Kong and walked away, stopped wasting his time to talk with his colleague.

Lieutenant Kong wasn't a bad looking guy in women's eyes. However, his personality and behavior usually annoyed his interlocutor. Although Kong was a cool, capable detective and his skills were hard to find in others, Gawin thought that Kong's social skills should be improved immensely before he could go out asking girls on a date without frustrating them.



Som raised his hands to greet the psychiatrist who opened the door to the therapy room with a smiley face. Today, Dr. Pang was in a colorful, floral pattern dress that made her cheer up. "Hello, Doctor."

"Good to see you today." Pang sat down on a chair across the sofa on which Som was sitting. "How are you? During the time we haven't met, is there anything interesting?"

"Nothing in particular. I no longer hear the sound in my head ordering me to do anything in these past two days."

Pang raised her eyebrows with a surprise. "That's very good news. Som, can you tell me where this place is and what time it is now?"

"This is the Psychiatric Department, and it should be..." Som was thoughtful. "10 a.m."

Pang was happy that her patient's condition had immensely improved, compared to the first day he came in. His condition was so severe that it was hard to communicate with him or draw him from that hallucination. "Can you still see the Grim Reaper?"

The skinny man in the patient's gown knitted his brows. "No, Doctor."

But she caught Som's unusual reaction. "Are you uncertain of something? Can you tell me? "

"About the Grim Reaper...came to think about it, I think what I saw that night wasn't a hallucination, Doctor." Som closed his eyes, trying to extract those memories on that night. "I saw a person enter someone's house in the village, so I followed him to peak through the slightly opened window. I saw that person standing at the end of the bed. Someone on the bed was sound asleep, looking so pale as if that person was no longer breathing..."

Pang went silent for a while. "Som, please continue."

"When that person came out of the house, I went inside and see...the person on the bed really stopped breathing, and the one who killed...was the Grim Reaper. That Grim Reaper was in black at night...but wearing white during the day..." Som suddenly opened his eyes and went still as if he was cursed.

Pang reached out to touch Som's elbow lightly.

"I know it's hard to speak about that again. It'll worsen your condition, Som. So we should stop talking about this topic." She decided to divert Som's attention to other matters. "How is your overall mood today?"

After Pang finished a one-on-one therapy session, she left the therapy room and walked towards her office, next to the Outpatient Department. She sat on a chair, absentmindedly looked at the door.

She thought what Som had said was just the hallucination at first. But today, Som's condition had immensely improved, neither hallucinations nor delusions occurred. His mental state was practically a normal person, but he still spoke about the day he saw someone entered the dwelling and killed the person lying on the bed as if he told it from the memories that he had actually seen.

Pang couldn't bring Som into the details of the event because doing that could trigger his hallucinations which would reverse everything to its original state. As far as she could evaluate at the moment, Som might have really seen something. Pang could only hope that it wasn't what she was thinking right now.



There were only a handful of people in this hospital who could wipe out all the information on the cameras.

One of them should probably be the person who signed off on financial statement to buy more CCTV cameras and control the installation himself.

This morning, Gunn intentionally parked his car near Director Somsak's residence, so that he could observe Somsak's residence while he was in his car after work. He wanted to drink in all the details he saw. The residence was a two-story single-family house. It was beautiful and new, compared to other staff's residences in the hospital area. It was understandable though, as Somsak was a senior executive.

Gunn saw CCTV cameras facing to the front of the residence and he immediately realized that invading Somsak's house wouldn't be as easy as entering Pharmacist Boze's which none was installed. If Gunn was to be caught this time, it would be difficult to get himself out of the mess. However, if he couldn't prove his innocence, Gunn and Wasan's relationship would never progress. Additionally, that person would continue slandering him until he had to go to jail for first-degree murder charge.

Another thing that became worrisome was that Gunn couldn't do much since he was being watched by Lieutenant Kong who was following him like a shadow. Although Gunn wasn't followed all the time, he had no idea when Kong or his lackeys were watching. If Gunn was unlucky and did something strange under the police's surveillance, his life could have plunged into the abyss in an instant.

"Damn it!" Gunn slammed his fist on the steering wheel to vent his frustration.

He was all at sea.

The situation now was like a ticking time bomb.

If he acted too slow, the culprit might successfully make Gunn become the real murderer.

Chapter Twenty

Honey-Coated Poisons

Three years ago.

This was the first day Dr. Guntapat, a family physician who received the medical specialist scholarship from the hospital, came to work. Somsak summoned the new physician to chat and get to know each other. The handsome eager Guntapat raised his hands to greet Somsak. As a 29-year-old physician, he was considered very young. He looked typically little nervous as he had just arrived in a new place.

"Please sit down." Somsak gestured towards the chair in front of his desk. Gunn bowed slightly and took the seat. "Today is your first day. Do you have additional requests, Doctor?"

Gunn shook his head. "I'm good for now, Professor."

"Have you met Professor Anucha?"

"Yes, I have. Professor Anucha told me to see you here before performing my duty at RPHPH." He replied.

"I want to welcome you and ask a few questions about the future prospect." Somsak grabbed a book from the drawer and put it on the desk. "This is the handbook for palliative care from Chiang Mai Hospital. I've heard that when you're a resident^[33], you're interested in this field. You went to several study visits and your research that was published internally was also focused on palliative care."

The new physician nodded. "Yes, Professor."

"I want this for our hospital." Somsak passed that handbook to Gunn. "So far, no doctor could permanently stay in this field. I secretly hope that you might be able to take this job."

He nodded. "I intend to take palliative care job."

Somsak laughed pleasingly. "I was right to give you the scholarship. I won't rush you. Draft the project out one step at a time. Plan out the system first. You can always tell me if you want any resources" He stood up; Gunn quickly followed suit. Somsak extended his hand and Gunn reached out to grab it. "Welcome again, Doctor. Have fun working here."



Drawn like a moth to a flame. This proverb could perfectly describe Wasan's life in this moment. After his long double shifts, tonight Wasan had a chance to get some rest till the next day. So, he hurriedly drove his car to Gunn's house, like a tiny moth enthralled by a pretty, warm, seductive flame.

He did everything opposite to what he should do. He ignored the warnings of those around him. He ignored Inspector Aim's advice to stay away from this complication. He didn't even care his own words, vowing that he wouldn't get back with Gunn until the mystery was solved.

Gunn already opened the gate for him. Wasan parked his motorcycle next to Gunn's car, then removed his shoes and went to the tall man who stood waiting for him at the front door.

"Welcome home."

Wasan sighed, annoyed. "Isn't it your home?"

"It'd be 'ours.'" Gunn held Wasan's hand, taking him inside. Wasan felt like his brain was going to blow up right there. "Are you hungry? I've prepared dinner for you today."

"I'm so sleepy and starving." Wasan pulled his shirt out of his pants and unzipped it, leaving only a white T-shirt and uniform pants. Gunn took Wasan's shirt and put it on the chair. "You're trying to overly please me today. What do you want?"

Gunn smiled as an answer, moving the chair for Wasan to sit. "Please sit and wait for me. I'll bring you the food."

Wasan refused to wait. He walked into the kitchen to see what Gunn had prepared for him. He saw one pot of cooked spaghetti and

another one with tomato sauce, emitting mouth-watering aroma. "I'm just a poor northerner. I'm not quite familiar with the western food."

Gunn looped his hands around Wasan's waist from behind. His lips were at Wasan's ear. "After you taste it, you'll change your mind, Inspector."

Honey-Coated Poisons.

Wasan wanted to list Gunn as one kind of narcotic drugs. This drug made Wasan feel ecstatic like he was in heaven despite knowing that it was terrible and harmful. Wasan still returned to it repeatedly.

How many times had he begged Gunn to touch him? How many times had he allowed the other man to hug, kiss, and engage in a meaningful physical engagement? It was a vicious circle in which he could never bring himself out, no matter how hard he tried.

He woke up in the middle of the night, naked. His partner was soundly asleep next to him. Wasan removed the blanket and dropped his legs on the floor. He stared blankly at the moonlight shining through the window into Gunn's bedroom.

He felt that he was so weak.

He couldn't resist this infatuation, couldn't use reason above love. It was only fair that he was looked down upon or was forced to withdraw from this case.

He probably couldn't do much except preparing for the most painful moment in his life that might happen one day.



On Saturday morning, which was Gunn's day off and Wasan's rare shift-free day, Deputy Superintendent Bert and Lieutenant Gawin appeared in front of Gunn's house with a search warrant. Gunn, dressed in T-shirt and sweatpants, opened the gate for both police officers. He was surprised at first, but he was ready to fully cooperate with the officers.

"Is there anyone else home?" Asked Bert.

"Yes," Gunn replied. He appeared uncomfortable for a moment before speaking out. "Inspector Wasan."

Bert and Gawin looked at each other.

Bert, the higher rank officer, turned back to Gunn. "I want to let you know beforehand that I'm in charge of the security guard case, which is derived from the pharmacist case. We thought that since the two incidents occurred in the same place, they could be related to each other. So, Inspector Wasan let me handle the case."

"I understand. Wasan already told me," Gunn walked to open the living room door. "Please come in."

Wasan, who was in a T-shirt and short pants, widened his eyes as he walked down the stairs and found that they had two guests in the uniforms. He saluted the Deputy Superintendent and then glanced at Lieutenant Gawin. His face was full of questions.

Gawin walked past Wasan to the second floor, while Bert began to investigate the items in the living room. Gunn stood with his hands behind his back, calmly looking at the Deputy Superintendent, who was observing the showcase.

"Is there anything special in this house, Wasan?" Bert gazed at Wasan.

"N...nothing unusual, only daily life products," Wasan replied, turning to look at Gunn who was standing still like a statue.

"Because Inspector didn't search thoroughly?" Bert took Gunn's commencement ceremony picture down to observe.

"I only stay here occasionally. I didn't search for anything." Wasan immediately changed the subject. "By the way, did you have to come here yourself, sir?"

"I'd like to collect the information myself." After he had been satisfied with the living room, he moved to the kitchen. He went down on his knees to check every cabinet and drawer.

Wasan walked to stand beside Gunn.

Gunn gently touched Wasan on the back to encourage him, for Wasan must have felt a certain amount of pressure right now.

"I found nothing unusual, Deputy." Gawin walked down from the second floor and went straight to report to Bert, who had reached the storeroom in the backyard.

After an hour had passed, both police officers bid farewell to Gunn and walked out to the police car parked in front of the house.

"They'd definitely tell the whole station." Wasan massaged his eyebrows.

"You do nothing wrong. You just slept over at your boyfriend's house." Gunn embraced Wasan, who seemed tensed, by the shoulder before turning to kiss his temples as a consolation. "I didn't do anything wrong, so I've nothing to fear. You don't have to worry. Today is your day off. You should relax and don't worry about anything. We should head inside to have breakfast."

Wasan and Gunn walked back into the kitchen. There had been plain porridge and three dishes waiting on the table since before those police officers came in for investigation. Wasan tried to shake off the recurring thoughts in his head and turned his attention to the things the owner of the house attentively had prepared for him. "This is the first time someone has made me breakfast."

"So you should keep that 'someone' with you." Gunn scooped up a spoon of rice, tasted it and shook his head. "It's gone cold. I didn't know we'd have to leave it this long. I'll reheat it for you."

While Gunn poured the rice back into a rice cooker to reheat, Wasan who was watching him asked, "Do you have any plan today?"

"Ah, yes." Something occurred to Gunn. "I've a meeting with a pharmaceutical company in Chiang Mai at 6 p.m., followed by dinner. I might arrive home around dusk, shouldn't exceed 8 p.m."

"Okay, that way I could calculate my time to go back home."

"You don't have to go back. Stay here tonight. You can go back before you head to your morning shift tomorrow." Gunn pleaded with his eyes; the same way he did when he came to beg Wasan to stay with him in the middle of the night. "You'll be on duty and gone for many days. I won't be able to hug you again for a while. Spend another night with me, please, Babe."

He hated those big puppy eyes and loathed his heart that was soft like a cotton wool. Wasan crossed his arms and sighed annoyingly.



Their whole day flew by incredibly fast. Gunn took Wasan to have lunch at a famous restaurant in downtown, followed by a

pastry shop in a country-like atmosphere, then went to a mall, and returned home with a bag carrying fresh food that Gunn had planned to cook for Wasan before leaving, so that Wasan wouldn't be starved while waiting for him to come back home.

"Actually, I can go and buy something to eat on my own. No need to be troubled." Wasan said while filling a basin with water to rinse the vegetables.

"I also made it for myself. When I come back, I must be hungry again for sure." Gunn pressed a button on the rice cooker. "You don't need to go out in the middle of the night. I'm worried."

"Hey." Wasan flicked his slightly wet hands to Gunn. "You'd better worry about yourself than being worried about the police with a gun like me."

Wasan couldn't help smiling when Gunn's laugh. He had even momentarily forgotten his stress. He looked down at a stream of water flowing through his hand into the small basin. A thought came to him that, in this life, he wouldn't want anything more than to peacefully spend his time with his special guy. But what he thought was still just a cloud cuckoo land.

A silent evening came not long after Gunn drove out of the house. Wasan became a temporary majordomo for him. He chose to spend his free time with the unfinished case files and brought them to the dining table. He turned on the television and listened to the news.

Wasan didn't expect Gunn to come back on time. Because, after dinner, Gunn would have to drive across the province. He expected that Gunn would be back around 10.

But when he looked up at the clock again, it was already past 11. Wasan saw LINE messages from Gunn on his phone screen, so he picked it up to read.

'I might be late. My old friend invited me to join at the bar not far from here. We haven't seen each other for a very long time'

'Wasan, don't wait for me. Go to bed.'

'Don't be mad, Babe. I'll hurry back to hug you.'

Wasan stared at Gunn's messages for a while. His brain was blank. Even though what Gunn said was true, the doubts still appeared in his mind. It emphasized how much he was still wary of

Gunn. He had no way of knowing where Gunn was, what he was doing, or whether he was tricking him.

However, what's more frightening was: the time when he had to choose what he should do, on the day he was certain that the man he loved had always deceived him.

Wasan took a deep breath, trying not to think about the gloomy future. He turned off the computer and walked up to the second floor to take a rest before he had to wake up to fight with a heavy workload the next day.



"Tua, pay attention to the rehab! Don't misbehave!" Tum was on the phone with his sister, who was currently in heroin rehabilitation. Tum was just informed that his sister was often uncooperative in group therapy. "You've no idea what I've been through to prevent you from going to jail, so don't disappoint me. We only have each other. You've to stay with me, alright? Promise me you'll pay attention. Okay. It's already midnight; you go to bed. See you tomorrow."

Tum hung up and got to his feet, swinging his backpack to carry on the shoulder. He walked out of the nurse station, said goodbye to his colleagues and left the medical ward drowsily. The afternoon shift was decent. Critical patients were stable; he didn't have to run around much. Now, it was time for him to recharge his energy by having a good sleep, lazing away on bed till noon, and driving to take his sister on a trip and taking some photos together.

After entering his room, he was stunned for a moment. His tidy belongings were rummaged and scattered across the floor. The wardrobe door was hung open, and the bedsheet was snatched out from the bed. Tum hurriedly went straight to the valuables with a panic. However, nothing was missing.

"W...what should I do?" Tum turned around warily before deciding to grab his phone. The first person he thought of was that particular officer, his nemesis. Tum couldn't reach for other officers since he couldn't explain everything to them. If they asked whether Tum had

ever had a fight with someone, he couldn't tell them that he once got into trouble with the Doctor whom he had secretly searched through his desk. That was probably not such a good idea.

He should contact the person who made him live in a paranoid terror until today. Even though Tum had deleted his contact completely, he could still remember Kong's LINE account ID. That's because it was the most irritating ID in the world. He opened the LINE application and typed 'Konghandsome' into the search tab.



Police Sub-Lieutenant Kong stretched his arms to relieve his tiredness. He had been parking diagonally from Gunn's housing estate main gate for two hours now. He dropped by sometimes to observe whenever he had time during his shift. Needless to say, Kong couldn't follow Gunn around 24/7 a day, so he randomly came here to make sure that Gunn wasn't aware of being watched. If he was lucky, he might be able to witness the solid evidence that would incriminate Wasan's lover under his or his minions' surveillance.

Now, it was ten past midnight. Still no movement in front of the housing estate. Kong thought that he would be here for a while, and then move on to perform his duty at the liquor store to find information for other cases assigned to him. He pulled out his phone to check his LINE message. Soon, an unexpected message from the person he least expected appeared on the screen. Kong widened his eyes, quickly slide open the message.

'Lieutenant Kong.'

'My room has been rummaged.'

'Can you come?'

"Shit." Kong swore under his breath before he replied,

'Find somewhere safe. I'll be there.'

'I'll go to the ward to stay with my friend.'

Kong threw the phone onto the passenger seat and started the engine. He turned on the headlight and quickly left.

A tall figure of a young man in a black shirt and pants walked out of the shadow behind a spot where Lieutenant Kong's car had parked. He looked at that car until it turned at the corner and disappeared from his sight. He put on a black cap to hide his face, then went back to his car that parked on the side of the road, far away from here.

Chapter Twenty One

A Plan to Expose

Gunn knew that the black car usually parked at the entrance of the estate was Lieutenant Kong's. He knew from his observation until he saw the driver's face and was confirmed that he was, indeed, Kong. He decided that if he saw this car again, he would find a way to lure this detective away from himself for a while.

Therefore, every time Gunn came home at night, he would pull up around the side road before the gate of the estate. Then, he would observe around whether Lieutenant Kong's car was parking nearby. Usually, if the car was there, Gunn would drive past, pretending he didn't see anything.

But not tonight.

After seeing that car at 10 p.m., he pretended to call and ask the staff in the medical ward about who was responsible for the afternoon shift. He claimed that he had just realized he must explain to the nurse on the afternoon shift about the continuous input of morphine dosage into venous veins of the patient with terminal stage lung cancer.

He got the answer that Tum was in the afternoon shift, which was from 4 p.m. to midnight.

Kong should have realized how mistaken he had been to reveal himself to Gunn. His biggest mistake wasn't just letting Gunn know who he was and even saw his face, but it was when he showed himself to protect the man whom Kong claimed to be his boyfriend. That was a weakness Gunn could easily exploit.

Gunn drove back to the hospital. He did what would make Tum call Kong in an instant after going off his shift. Gunn didn't think this method would work at first, but when he saw Lieutenant Kong hastily drive out at midnight, he was positive that no one was watching him right now.



Click.

Lock-picking sound was heard in the big house. The tall figure in all black came inside, looking around the ground floor of the completely dark and silent house. Only the light from the outside dimly shone in. However, it was enough for Gunn to be able to search through the items in Somsak's dwelling, who should be asleep on the upper bedroom by now.

Gunn went straight to a desk near a sofa in front of the television first. He hoped that Somsak would keep most of his belongings in here. His hands in black leather gloves opened each drawer on the desk, flashing the light to see what's in there. Mostly, he saw documents and stationery. Gunn kept looking to the bottom drawer and found a wooden box in it. He gradually drew it out and opened it to look what's inside.

There were a man's black wallet and a phone. Gunn's eyes got wide. He picked up the wallet and opened it.

Suddenly, the light on the stairs was turned on.

Gunn quickly turned off the flashlight and hid in a space under the desk while hugging the wooden box tightly to his chest. He heard footsteps coming down the stairs. Gunn held his breath in the dark. His heart was pounding so hard that it roared in his ears.

Soon after, he heard the refrigerator door being opened, followed by pouring water sound and Somsak's cough. Then the footsteps returned upstairs.

For him, only a few seconds almost felt like an eternity. Finally, the light on the stairs was turned off, followed by the sound of the door being shut on the second floor. Gunn waited until he was confident that there was no more movement from the owner of the house. He,

then, slowly came out from under the desk, turning on the flashlight to see the item inside the box again. He quickly brought out the wallet and opened it.

Gunn didn't care about a cash worth only a few hundred in the wallet, but what's interesting inside was an ID card of Mr. Yongyuth Theera.

It wasn't the right time to be stunned, so he went ahead and tried to turn on the phone that probably belonged to Yongyuth, but it was out of battery.

Gunn didn't have a charger for this Android phone model with him right now. What he needed to do was stealing the phone, finding the charger, and looking for interesting information on the decedent's phone. However, it couldn't be as he had planned. He wanted to find the evidence without alerting him because if Somsak learned that something was missing, he would open the security camera in front of the house, and Gunn would be in big trouble. So, Gunn turned the phone around to see if it was the type that came with a Micro SD Card slot. Unfortunately, modern smart phones these days usually didn't come with the memory card slot.

It didn't matter. This was sufficient to confirm that Director Somsak might be the one who killed Yongyuth. In addition, he might be related to Pharmacist Boze's demise and the mastermind who was plotting to frame Gunn.

Why did he do this?

This was what Gunn had to figure it out.

Gunn took his phone out to take pictures of the items in the box, Yongyuth's ID card, and the drawer he found those things. Then he kept everything in place and closed the drawer as if nothing had happened. He tiptoed back towards the backdoor where he had the lock picked. He pressed the doorknob locked, gently and silently pushed the door closed before disappearing into the darkness of the night.



Wasan was startled awake when someone's warm hand wrapped under his arm and embraced his torso tightly from behind. He groggily opened his eyes, frowning when he smelled the faint alcohol from the breath upon his neck. "You..."

"I miss you so much, Wasan." Gunn drew his voice while Wasan pushed the face of the man who came to disturb his sleep away.

"Go take a shower!" Wasan turned to look at the glowing clock at the headboard, showing 2.15 a.m. Gunn must have drunk until the bar closed as Wasan had guessed that he must be a heavy drinker. "How did you come back?"

"I drove here by myself."

Wasan sighed. "How lucky the police didn't arrest you."

"A bar was nearby. Nice atmosphere. Good music. Good drinks. But you were not there with me. I'll take you there next time. I wanna drink with you, like that day." Gunn's hand stroked under Wasan's t-shirt. "And for drunk driving, if the police wanna arrest me, I'll let you be the first who arrests me. Go ahead and handcuff me."

Gunn became more talkative and incoherent like the time when Wasan saw him drunk. He pulled Gunn's arm from his body. "Act your age! You go take a shower. I want to sleep."

Gunn made a fuss for a moment before he obediently got to his feet. Wasan looked at Gunn who was taking off his clothes before he fell back asleep. Wasan woke up again when Gunn lay next to him, with pleasant soap scent. Gunn pulled Wasan to his chest, and he willingly moved closer to him.

"Wasan." Gunn said, "No matter what happens after this, will you stand by my side?"

"Depending on whether your action was legal or illegal." Wasan glanced at the person asking the question. "Why do you ask?"

"I'm just scared that you'll misunderstand me like other police officers, and leave me." He bent down and kissed Wasan's forehead. Wasan closed his eyes, accepting the kiss. "It's nothing. Let's go back to sleep, Babe."

Hearing what Gunn had just said, Wasan opened his eyes for a second time. He could sense something strange in the other man's

tone. It made Wasan have a premonition of something bad. He didn't know whether this tranquil night was as tranquil as it seemed.



Pol. Maj. Wasan raised his head from the documents on his desk when he heard someone storming into the room. The man in the black leather jacket and the cap with the same color walked towards Wasan with a sullen face Wasan had never seen before.

"What is it?" Wasan asked curtly.

"Inspector." Lieutenant Kong sat down on the chair opposite to Wasan, removing the cap to reveal the close-cropped hair. "I know that Inspector is living at Dr. Guntapat's house at the moment, so I wanna ask you something."

Wasan let of a sigh, revealing dissatisfaction. "I won't tell you anything because this is my private life. Asking me like this is disgusting."

"No, no! Listen to me first." Kong swiftly raised his hands to show that he didn't mean to offend Wasan, who seemed to be angrier. But well, recently, only seeing Kong, Wasan would be pissed without him having to do anything. "I just want to ask whether Dr. Gunn was with you all night?"

"Why do you wanna know?"

"Last night, I monitored Dr. Gunn and I lost him at some point. I just want a confirmation that Dr. Gunn didn't leave the house." Kong asked with an abnormally serious face.

Wasan was going to tell the truth that Gunn went out on the meeting in Chiang Mai from 5 p.m. to around 2 a.m., however, something prohibited Wasan from speaking it out. As if there were invisible hands gradually reaching out and covering his mouth from behind. Wasan's sense of righteousness was shaken by the dark force in his heart. The shadow between two forces was so intense that he couldn't answer Kong's question.

"Inspector?" Kong called Wasan who went still for a while, and the call drew Wasan's gaze back at the man before him.

No matter what happens after this, will you stand by my side?

"No. He didn't go anywhere. Gunn...stayed with me all night." Even he himself was shocked by what he just said. Kong had a suspicious expression before nodding, accepting the answer and standing up.

"Inspector, don't worry; Nothing serious happened." Kong bowed to Wasan and left.

Wasan's gaze followed the officer in casual attire until he completely left the room. He leaned against his chair as if his strength had been completely vacuumed. In that moment, it was as if Wasan's sense of righteousness and justice was hammered down.

What have I done?



Gunn looked at the picture of Yongyuth's ID card while he was not busy with patients at the RPHPH. His thought was going around a plan to expose what he saw to the police. The reason that Yongyuth's belongings were found at the Director's room meant only one thing:

Somsak might have killed the guard and covered it up, so that it looked like larceny.

The reason Yongyuth was killed might relate to something he had found on the CCTV footages.

But Gunn had to step back because he had to weigh the pros and cons of the consequence of his actions. Of course, he couldn't take this thing to the police freely. There must be a more subtle approach. Should he send it to the police anonymously by printing this picture, sealing it in an envelope and placing it where the police could find? Or frankly asked for Wasan's help and begged him to conceal the source of information?

The second way wouldn't work; it's too risky. Wasan was a righteous police officer. He would want to know how Gunn obtained this information. Gunn shouldn't want anything from Wasan, except for him to be by his side. Other than that, Wasan didn't have to know Gunn's other matters that were not helpful to their relationship.

After a thorough contemplation, Gunn thought that he must tell the police regardless. He might be charged with trespass but that would be better than waiting until he was framed as a murderer. Gunn decided that after work, he would take the evidence to the police station and confess how he got this evidence.



After work, Gunn swiftly drove back home to print out the pictures from his phone. He prepared the envelope and went over what he would say to the police for a moment before picking up the satchel and heading to the front door. Gunn was turning back to lock the glass door when he heard footsteps walking towards him.

He turned back, and suddenly, his eyes grew wide.

"Hello, Dr. Gunn," With a low voice, the tall middle-aged man greeted Gunn.

Dr. Somsak was standing in the driveway, with two hands in his pockets. Gunn tried to remain emotionless, turning to look at the man who deliberately entered his house.

"You came here, today. What can I help you?" Gunn spun his satchel behind, glaring the other man.

Somsak approached Gunn, who stood firm without showing any fear. "Shall we talk about this?"

Somsak brought his phone out from his pocket. On the phone, there was a picture taken from the computer screen. It was a black and white picture from the CCTV camera. It was a man in all black, covering up his face with a cap. Gunn quickly glanced up at the man before him.

"What do you want to show me, Professor?"

"Go inside the house." What Somsak brought from the other pocket was a silver object, shining in the sunlight. Its cold end was on Gunn's belly.

Gunn held his breath when he realized the item could instantly end his life if he didn't do what the man before him had ordered. He clenched his fists, feeling numb from head to toe.

"Don't over think it. Open the door and walk back inside, Dr. Guntapat."

Chapter Twenty Two

Pursuit

Gunn was sitting on a chair that was just moved to the area between the kitchen and the living room. His hands were placed on his groins; he was too afraid to even move them. This was the first time he'd felt like he was standing on the edge of the abyss that was ready to consume his life. But he couldn't express much of such a terrified feeling. The other person was sitting on a sofa, pointing the gun at him with an unconcerned face.

"When would your boyfriend come back?" Somsak asked.

"He should be back soon. He's been sleeping here with me lately." He lied. Today, Wasan told him that he wouldn't come, but he wanted to make the guy in front of him believe that Wasan might show up at any minute,

Somsak laughed. "Smart boy. Let's me tell you something, intelligent people typically die young." The middle-aged man stared at Gunn. "Let's cut to the chase. Why did you break into my house last night?"

"I've no idea what you're talking about, Professor." Gunn calmly answered.

Somsak sighed heavily. "Hey Gunn, you shouldn't lie to me at this point. Let's be straight with me. Why did you go into my house and what did you see?"

Gunn clenched his fists and thought twice about the situation. He was hoping that Wasan would stop by for any reason, but this wish seems unlikely. "Professor, how did you know it's me? The guy in the photo could be anybody."

“Only an abnormal thief would’ve stolen nothing. I saw that you’ve been watching my house from your car since yesterday evening. It can’t be someone else.” Somsak spoke with an unbelievably calm manner. “So, tell me what you found when you entered my house last night.”

Gunn shook his head. “You wouldn’t shoot me anyway. Or else I wouldn’t give the answer you wanted. There’ve been enough deaths of hospital personnel.”

“I wouldn’t harm you, but your beloved Inspector might not be very safe.” What Somsak just said made Gunn immediately raise his head. “So, can we have a decent talk now?”

Gunn turned his head to the other way with a hurt and incensed expression. He thought he’d planned it all well, but it just turned out to slip away from hands of the police at last, and even might put his loved one in danger. He couldn’t forgive himself for this mistake.

Somsak stood up and approached Gunn; the gun was still pointing at him. “Let me change the question. Have you told what you found out to anyone? Did your boyfriend know?”

Gunn decided to bravely stare back in his eyes. “If the police knew, you wouldn’t be pointing a gun at me like this.”

Somsak smirked insidiously. “Okay, we were finally speaking the same language.” Somsak reached out and took Gunn by his chin. Gunn stared back and didn’t avoid his eyes. “I think of two possibilities. First, you’ve already told someone else. Second, for some reasons, you still kept my secret. Since it’s the latter, things would just be easier.” Somsak lowered his head to Gunn’s.

“What you said was correct. I didn’t want any more personnel in my hospital to die. Let’s make a deal. You keep my secret sealed and I...would do the same for you.”

The light in Gunn’s eyes was flickering for a moment, but he chose to remain silent.

Somsak went on. “We should just continue living a peaceful life like this. Don’t complicate things. Don’t stroke me the wrong way. If you break the promise, you’ll definitely join me in prison.”

Gunn closed his eyes, trying to calm down for several seconds. “I’ve nothing to hide.”

Somsak laughed out loud. "You could deny if you want. I know you're afraid of my threat anyway."

He knitted his eyebrows. "Professor, you killed Pharmacist Boze, didn't you?"

"You already know enough, Doctor." Somsak patted Gunn's shoulder while walking away. "It's settled then, Gunn. Don't make things more complicated than they are. You'd better continue living your life with your boyfriend than get involved in this whole mess. After this, if you aren't comfortable to work with me here, you can tell me. If you want to move to other local hospitals, I'll help you with a good recommendation."

Gunn assessed that the wisest way out was to take a step back and accepted the offer from the murderer in front of him. He nodded in agreement and pointed to his briefcase on the sofa. "Please take it, Professor. I'll also delete the files."

"Good! Please delete them in front of me, now." Somsak picked up Gunn's briefcase. "If I saw that these photos were leaked later. You should be ready to pack your stuff and follow me."



Wasan was sitting on a marble bench, holding a serving spoon and having a plate of rice topped with stir-fried pork and basil in front of him. But he had stopped eating for a while and just sat there absent-mindedly. He felt like he was on a roller-coaster ride. Wasan was confused about what he'd done, as well as shocked and surprised that he'd lied to protect the man he wasn't even sure he knew him enough.

"Flies have spawned on your plate, Captain." A familiar voice came from behind.

Wasan turned to look and found a tall guy in a black T-shirt and jeans smiling at him. His face immediately lit up with surprise.

"Aof, how did you come here?!"

"I took a day off to come and get my mom's medical records. My mom's going to move to my place. So, I need to transfer her records."

"I forgot that you're born here."

“We both grew up in this town, remember?” Aof sat on the seat opposite to Wasan. “So, I wanted to see you. Luckily, I met you.” The Deputy District Chief just noticed a badge of a star under Thai theatrical crown on Wasan’s shoulder. “Wow, you’re an inspector now. Congratulations!”

Wasan looked at the face of his interlocutor. A lot of memories came back to his mind—starting from the first time that this guy came to Wasan with a coffee in his hand while he was inspecting a crime scene. They started to keep in touch and dated for a short period, before they broke up as Wasan had to move back here, in order to care for his mother. Aof was one of the guys Wasan ever had sex with, but Aof did not completely possess Wasan’s heart, so he was able to end the relationship easily when he decided to move back home.

“You know, I’ve come this far. I might as well want to see your face before I leave.”

“Then, you’re lucky.” Wasan placed his spoon in his lunchbox. His inattentive eyes looked far behind Aof and he was quiet for a while. “What kind of a person do you think I am?”

Instead of asking how the other person was, Wasan chose to ask this question.

Aof was surprised at first, before gently smiling. “You’re a person who hides cuteness behind a gallant appearance. But if someone really knows you, he’ll find that you’re more sensitive than expected. You love justice. Whatever is wrong, Wasan will address it and make it right.”

“What if I told you that I’ve just lied to protect a person I love.” Wasan said. This further question surprised Aof more than before. “What would that say about me?”

“The ‘Wasan’ I’ve known wouldn’t do such a thing.” Aof smiled lightly, but his eyes seemed saddened. “If you’ve changed yourself that much for someone, then he must be a very important person to you.”

“It’s more like I’m losing myself.”

Aof touched Wasan’s arm. “I don’t know who you’re dating, Wasan, but whatever you’re dealing with, I’m supporting you all the

way." The man got to his feet. "Hearing this, I know that I've no chance of getting you back. But I want you to know that when you feel bad, you still have me, Wasan."

Wasan glanced up at the other man. "Move on, Deputy Aof."

"Let my heart rest for a while and I'll find someone as good as you, Wasan." He took a deep breath, then tried to smile as bright as he could. "I've to go. I'm glad to see you're well, Inspector."

"Well, tell your mother I send my regards." Wasan closed the lunch box he'd barely touched and glanced at his ex-boyfriend, who was walking towards the parking lot in front of the police station.

Wasan didn't want to compare between the two guys, but he couldn't resist comparing that the feeling when he looked at Deputy Aof and Dr. Gunn was undeniably different. No one created the sensation of electricity running through his entire body with a little touch as Gunn. The eyes that looked deep into his soul and the alluring mystery—all of these created a black hole in Wasan's mind that rooted too deep for him to get away. And he was stupid enough to put himself in the blackhole despite knowing that the suction might remove his flesh and torn apart his identity.



Lieutenant Gawin said that nurses like a person who treat them well while they were on their shifts. So, Lieutenant Kong followed the advice.

With an annoying smirk, Kong looked at Tum who seemed astonished. In Kong's hands, there were a bag of fried meatballs, sticky rice, Nam Prik Num^[34], vegetables, fried fish, a hot Gang Liang^[35], and two bags of Lod Chong^[36] desserts.

"Did you buy all these to feed the whole ward?" Tum cried out when he saw the amount of foods Lieutenant Kong had claimed that he bought solely for him.

"This one is for Nurse Tum." Kong handed a bag of fried fish to him. "This is also for Tum. This, too, for Tum. And this one too..."

"Hey! Lieutenant Kong!" Tum quickly pushed the man, who became a center of the attention in the medical ward, into the nurses'

dining room. "Don't act like a child around here. I've to work."

"You said you're on a lunch break." Kong put down the bags of food on the table. "Then, eat."

"I don't like fried fish." Tum lied, intending to slight the other man. "Next time, if you don't know what I prefer, don't buy it for me."

However, Kong remained nonchalant. "Okay, I've crossed out the fried fish menu. I'll bring you food every day, so I could cross out the menu you don't like on each day..."

Tum really wanted to slap this pestering *fly*. But when chasing *it* away didn't work, Tum had no choice but to let *it* fly around until *it* was satisfied and left on its own. Tum sighed loudly. "Have you eaten anything, Lieutenant? If you hadn't, then eat here. I'll give the medicine to the patient and I'll be back to have lunch with you."

"Okay, hurry back, Baby."

Tum looked up at the ceiling, feeling like exploding, before walking out of the dining room without exchanging more words with Kong.

Kong turned to pick up the dishes near the sink and poured all the food on them. Other nurses who walked inside were surprised, and Kong told everyone that, "It's Tum's."

"Professor Gunn, hello."

The nurse's greeting drew Kong's attention to the medical ward outside the dining room. He walked to the door to observe silently. He saw the tall physician, who was wearing the short lab coat over the shirt, walked inside. Kong could sense the different aura emitting from Gunn. His handsome face seemed indifferent, but people could sense his frustration. His frigid eyes were terrifying his colleagues.

"Which bed is the new consultation?"

"Bed Number 6, sir." The young nurse handed the patient's chart to him and Gunn quietly accepted it.

Lieutenant Kong moved further into the dining room to prevent the other man from seeing him.

"Dr. Gunn, seeing this lung cancer patient reminds me of the one who died the day before yesterday. We should've a system that provides after-hour consultation." The nurse who came with Gunn spoke up.

"We need more personnel, which is a plan in the future," Gunn replied. "It's a shame I was busy that night. By the time I checked your Line message, it'd been already 2 a.m. and I had just arrived at home. Otherwise, I would've called the doctor on duty to prescribe the medicine to the patient and allow him to return home that night."

Kong widened his eyes slightly. The night before yesterday was the night Tum's room was searched and it was the night Wasan insisted that Gunn stayed with him all night. However, Gunn said that he returned home at 2 a.m. Kong continued eavesdropping on the conversation between the physician and the nurse which rendered no further interesting information.

One of them was lying right now.

He didn't want to look at Inspector Wasan in a negative light, but Kong could feel that Wasan was helping his boyfriend. What could confirm this was the CCTV camera that recorded images of vehicles entering Gunn's housing estate.

Kong pulled down the cap to hide his face. He took the opportunity when everyone wasn't watching to walk out of the dining room. He disappeared from the medical ward silently. He would have to leave his beloved nurse to have lunch by himself for now because he had a mission that can't wait too long.



'Can I come to stay with you tonight?'

Gunn knew that he should be joyful with the message he saw, but the impact of his constant stress derived from being pointed by a gun yesterday made him become apathetic. He only replied shortly,

'Where do you want me to pick you up?'

'At my house, as usual. I should get off work no later than 6 p.m.'

'Of course, Honey.'

Gunn put his phone into his pocket and looked up at the building of Director Somsak's office. His handsome face was emotionless; however, no one knew that his heart was like being blown by a storm.

The battle between the two physicians had begun.

And in this war, Gunn must not be the one who lost.



When they were in bedroom, Gunn held Wasan's hand and walked towards the bed. He pushed Wasan's shoulder as an order for him to sit. Gunn sat down next to him and hugged him tightly before burying his face in Wasan's shoulder.

Wasan looked at Gunn. There was a look of surprise on Wasan's face as he had never seen Gunn being like this. Gunn looked so stressful. He looked at Wasan with eyes full of worries.

"What is it?" Wasan turned to ask Gunn.

"I feel so fragile without you." He hugged Wasan even tighter.

"Why did you say something like that?" Wasan patted Gunn's head. "You've been acting weird lately. Go take a shower before bed."

"Sure." Gunn raised his head to kiss Wasan's temple once, then left to grab a towel and walked towards the bathroom.

Wasan took off his upper uniform and left it on the bed, only a white T-shirt remained. He turned his head to the bathroom door, waiting to hear the sound of running water to make sure that the man inside was indeed taking a shower. He got to his feet, walked to the door and went downstairs to the garage. He gazed at Gunn's bronze car for a moment and then reached into his pocket. He picked up a small, black object and hold it in his hand.

"I'm sorry," Wasan muttered before kneeling down and reaching under the car to attach the device to the metal underneath with its own magnet. Then, he stepped back and pulled out his phone to check whether the device was working.

The flickering signal on the map in Wasan's phone displayed the location of Gunn's car. Now, Wasan could monitor Gunn at any time. Knowing that this was like betraying his lover, but he could no longer stay with this *wall*. If Gunn had a secret with him, the sooner Wasan learned about it, the less painful he would be before it's too late. On the other hand, if Gunn was really innocent, this device would confirm that he hadn't shown up in suspicious places at the time of any incident.

Wasan hurried back to the bedroom, just in time when Gunn walked out of the bathroom—semi-naked wearing only a towel.

Gunn gazed at Wasan with a look of surprise. "Where have you been?"

"I went downstairs to get some water." He tried to act as normal as he could. "Do you finish? I'll take a shower."

Gunn stared at Wasan for a moment before nodding like he didn't suspect anything. He walked towards the closet and chose a tank top and shorts. "A bottle in front of the mirror is a lotion, not a soap. I'm scared you'd pick the wrong one."

"Hmm." Wasan grabbed his towel and walked into the bathroom. He closed the door and leaned against it, closing his eyes and letting out a long sigh.

In the midst of hot weather outside, two men were embracing each other in the chilly bedroom deriving from the air conditioner. Wasan thought that everything would continue like every other night, but oddly, today Gunn seemed tired and spaced out more than usual, even though Wasan was naked. So, he cupped his lover's face with his hands. Gunn's eyes shifted back to look at Wasan after unintentionally zoning out.

"Do you want to take a break?" Wasan asked.

"You've come this far; I don't want to let you down." Gunn bent down to kiss Wasan's neck. His hand slid up to stroke Wasan's strong chest.

Wasan let everything flow on its way for a moment before he could sense that a feeling he was receiving from Gunn was different. It didn't give him happiness, but instead, it made him feel uncomfortable and awkward. It seemed like Gunn's mind wasn't with Wasan. It wasn't even with himself. He caught Gunn's hands, which were fondling his chest, as a signal to stop.

"Do you have something to tell me, Gunn?"

Gunn ceased his motion. He popped up on his elbow while looking down at the man under his arms with eyes full of worries. It was like he wanted to say something, but he wouldn't let it out. Gunn rested his head on Wasan's chest and hugged him tightly as if he was

afraid the man in his arms would disappear. Wasan raised his hand to pat the other man's head.

"I've one thing to ask," Wasan said. He slipped his fingers into Gunn's thick, black hair. "Can we have no secret to each other?"

It was like Gunn stopped breathing for a moment before looking up at Wasan. "You think I've a secret?"

"It might be my investigative instincts that make me feel that way." Wasan moved his hand down to rub Gunn's cheek. "I let you know me in every way, but I feel that I still don't know you. If I don't know you, then how can we be together?"

Wasan's words seemed to spark something inside Gunn. Wasan thought that Gunn would speak obliquely—as usual—however, this time, Gunn hugged him tighter instead. The huge figure stayed still like he was gradually absorbing the warmth from Wasan's body. Wasan sighed. He was about to turn and grab a blanket to cover himself to put an end to what they were doing. Gunn, however, pushed Wasan to lie on his stomach. The big hand caressed from Wasan's thigh to his buttocks. "You've already known me well, Wasan. You know me better than anyone in this world."

Wasan held his breath unconsciously when his body felt the invasion. "G...Gunn." His hands clung onto the edge of the bed tightly. The sound that came after was the incoherent groan from Wasan's throat.

Chapter Twenty Three

The Lie

Dr. Pang paced back and forth in front of the Outpatient Psychiatry Department with a worried look. She didn't know what she should do with the situation she was facing at the moment. Her patient, Mr. Som, was getting better immensely. She was going to let him home in a few days, so she had to coordinate with the Home Visiting Unit to provide him with continuing care.

Honestly, there was nothing to worry about Som. The most worrisome issue was her assessment that the patient's story might actually be the truth, not a hallucination.

Som had really witnessed one person's death—the death that was caused by the man he called, '*The Grim Reaper*', and Som had actually pointed at the man he saw as the Grim Reaper for her to see.

Pang went to the window, absent-mindedly looking out of the building. She wanted to let this go. Let it be the past that the patient had faced.

But was it actually alright to let *the Grim Reaper* get off scot-free?
How many victims had died because of him?

And the rumors that *the person* was involved in every murder case made her feel even more uneasy. Pang didn't know whether the police would listen to what she was going to say. She could only hope that they would trust in her professional expertise.

Pang decided to take out her phone and dialed one of the police officers she knew. "Hello, it's Dr. Kanokpon. I've something to discuss with you."



"Holy fucking ghost!" Because of his startling swearing, all eyes of the people on the balcony turned to him. Nurse Tum stared at the man, who suddenly came out of the dark corner, making him literally jump in the air. "When will you stop doing this, Lieutenant Kong!? Are you a ghost, or something?!"

The man, who looked the least like a police officer Tum had ever known, smiled. His eyes seemed excited. "I've an interesting story to tell you."

Tum pouted. "I won't listen. Move back. I'm going off my shift."

"You're sulking because I didn't stay for lunch that day?" Kong stepped in to block Tum's path. "How can I make it up to you?"

Tum let out a heavy sigh as an answer and spun around.

Kong made a tsk sound and hurriedly walked with a long stride to block Tum another way. "Hey love, it's not healthy to keep sulking. You'll miss out on the cool information I just got," Kong lowered his voice. "About Dr. Guntapat on the night your room was rummaged."

Tum went silent and hesitantly looked up at Kong. He decided to take Kong's wrist and dragged him to the area out of people's sight.

Kong looked down at the hand that was holding his wrist and smiled pleasingly. Tum led him into a vacant treatment room, released his hand and turned to Lieutenant Kong with a serious expression. "Spill."

"I went to ask Doc's boyfriend whether Doc'd gone out that night. Inspector Wasan confirmed that Dr. Gunn had stayed with him all night, but it wasn't true." Kong took his phone out and opened the video from the camera installed in front of the housing estate. "This was Dr. Gunn's car, leaving the estate at 5.30 p.m. and haven't been seen until 2.05 a.m. when he got home."

Tum frowned and looked up at the taller man. "Which means that Dr. Gunn was the person who came in to rummage my room?"

"That night, Doc must've done something, but I couldn't find any proof." Kong smacked his lips. "What's obvious is that Wasan lied to me. He hid it from me. Dr. Gunn must've done something, so that

Inspector Wasan had to cover it for him. I'll use this information to squeeze the truth out of Wasan."

"Lieutenant, please take this information to the Investigators. Don't pressure Inspector Wasan. If he knows you've found out that he was lying, Dr. Gunn will know that too and you won't be safe."

Kong went still and grinned. "Are you worried about me, Tum?"

Tum sighed tiredly. "Dream on!"

"If a doctor could make a man like me feel unsafe, this country shouldn't have the police." Suddenly, Kong raised his hand and used his thumb to wipe the corner of Tum's mouth, making Tum's whole body become rigid. "Something was on your mouth." After that, the lieutenant who always enjoyed being a ghost turned on his heels and left the therapy room.

Tum remained stunned for several seconds, then raised his hand to rub the corner of his mouth. His heart was hammering the way it shouldn't be.

"Oh, for God's sake." Tum stepped back to lean on the sink behind him and looked up at the ceiling. "Is he a cop or a leech?"



"Wa-san!" His brother's call made him startled and drew his attention from a small backpack he was packing his clothes into. The inspector turned his head to see Thongkum leaning against his bedroom door frame, with arms crossed over his chest. "You've never stayed at home."

"Well, mind your own business." Wasan zipped his backpack closed. "I'll stay at my friend's house tonight, and the some other nights."

"Hey, Inspector, I don't mind where you'd stay at night. You're a grown-up man. But at least, tell me where you'd live and whether you'll come back here, so that my wife doesn't have to prepare anything for you in vain."

Wasan let out a sigh. "No need to prepare anything for me. I'll feed myself."

Thongkum stared at Wasan intensely. "Wasan, no offense, but I saw the person who usually picks you up..." Thongkum took a deep breath, as if he was trying to gather his courage. "The one who usually comes to pick you up. the one whom you used to bring over here, is he the one whom you're staying with tonight, right?"

Wasan was silent, his stern gaze flicked to his brother, making the older man flinch slightly. He was processing on the idea of how to tell his brother not to worry much about him. Due to the fact that they shared the bloodline and had just lost their mother, not to mention that Wasan was recently assaulted so brutally that he had to be admitted to the hospital, it wasn't so surprising that Thongkum would be so much concerned for Wasan, the youngest brother in the family, even though this little brother was a strong police officer who was also armed.

"I want to tell you the truth."

Thongkum swallowed while Wasan stood up and walked towards him. He grabbed on his brother's shoulders. "I know it's hard to listen, but I don't know why I've to hide it from you any longer. I..."

Thongkum touched Wasan's hand to stop him. "I know, Wasan." A silence fell between them, and Wasan was shocked. "I might seem stupid and dense, but I know my brother." Thongkum tightened his grip on Wasan's hand. "Go. Go where you'll be happy. I won't tell anyone because no one here would be able to accept it. I can't stand if other people talk badly about you. And if unexpected things happen, always remember that you still have a home. You're always welcome here."

Wasan had never seen this side of Thongkum. His brother's eyes stared at him with genuine love. It was so overwhelmed that his eyes were also welling up quietly with tears. Wasan clasped his palms together and leaned onto his brother's chest. Thongkum gently stroked Wasan cropped-short hair. "I'm sorry I've disappointed you."

"It's only two of us now. Who would I love if it wasn't you, huh?" Thongkum sniffed loudly. "It doesn't matter if you're gay, queer, or whatever you are. You're still my brother, understood?"

What Thongkum just said unlocked Wasan. He could now be true to his only remaining family member. This secret had been concealed

since Wasan began to know the concept of love, because it was the love that many people found disgusting; the love that was often looked down upon; the love that was regarded as a sin. There's nothing better than the family's acknowledgement and acceptance like the way Thongkum was doing at this moment.

The tears streaked down his cheeks from his happiness, as if the whole world had been lifted from his chest. Despite all of the misfortunes he was facing right now, at least he still had a brother whom he could return to.



Wasan decided to move in with Gunn as he was invited. It wasn't just to live with the man whom everyone thought that he was living with, but also to search for the truth from the view of a person closest to Gunn. Wasan admitted that he was using a feeling of trust as a tool, but there was no better way.

Before heading towards Gunn's home on his motorbike, Wasan dropped by a convenience store to buy some necessities. While Wasan, still in his uniform, was lining to pay, the small colorful packs of condom on the shelves near the cash register caught his attention. He reached for a pack of condom, remembering that it was the same brand Gunn used. He shifted the pack into his other hand and picked a bottle of lubricant gel, which was very necessary for him.

The gaze from people around Wasan made him super uncomfortable, especially an old lady standing behind him. She turned to whisper to another woman, "Look what that cop just bought."

Why did people have to claim that sex was shameful?

That attitude made most of population in this country feel too ashamed to learn about effective birth control or prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Wasan wasn't certain whether instigating others to think that what they did was shameful could allow a person to claim the moral high ground.

He laid down what he wanted on the counter to make a payment and walked out of the convenience store, no longer bothering about

the others' thoughts.



Wasan received a message from Gunn while he was working on the dining table in the kitchen after arriving at Gunn's house a while ago.

'How lucky. Today you get off work before me.'

'I'll be home a little late. Leave the message if you want something for dinner. I'll buy it for you.'

'See you at home, Babe.'

Wasan sent a sticker as a response to the messages. To be honest, Wasan was getting used to Gunn's sweet words. He was so accustomed that he expected for it whenever they chatted.

Later, he turned on the GPS and the signal showed that Gunn was at the hospital at the moment. Wasan placed his phone next to his computer. He glanced at it from time to time while he was drafting the case on his computer. Gunn's car was in the same place until 5.30 p.m. before moving to the road. Wasan speculated that Gunn was coming back home.

But then, Gunn turned to the opposite direction he should have headed to. Wasan stopped working, turned his head to the phone, and picked it up. He stared intensely at the screen.

Gunn drove out to the other side of the town and stopped in an area not far from the highway. Wasan decided to call the man whom he was tracking.

"Yes, Wasan?" The end of the line quickly answered.

"Where are you?"

"I'm still at the hospital."

Liar.

It was as if the world around him vanished in a blink of an eye. Wasan couldn't utter any words for a while. His hand, which was holding the phone, shook slightly. He tried to calm down, taking a deep breath to erase a twinge inside his heart. Wasan tried to continue talking even though his voice sounded shakier than usual.

"What are you doing at the hospital?"

"I'd just finished checking the patients. I'm drafting a project with my nurse at the moment."

Drafting a project with the nurse? How on earth could he say it out without remorse? His voice sounded so casual. If Wasan hadn't look at the signal indicating Gunn's location, he wouldn't have known that the other man lied. "Is that so...Gunn, can you get me papaya salad with grilled chicken on your way back?"

"Sure. The same shop?"

"Yeah..." Wasan massaged his tightly knitted eyebrows. "Hurry back."

His whole body felt heavy in an instant he hung up the call. Once Wasan caught Gunn lying, everything in the past seemed like a big lie. This made him feel worse than anything. But with his duty, he must carry on the investigation. Although the path he was taking was so painful, as if there were broken glasses paved throughout the way.

Wasan captured the screen displaying Gunn's current location. He planned to investigate that place when he had time. His duty after this was to pretend to be a sweetheart, turning off the computer and waiting for the man who was coming back. He would prepare the dishes on the table as well as his smile. He would welcome the man whom everyone knew that was Inspector Wasan's boyfriend.

The night passed peacefully. Both men ended a long day on their bed like countless other times. However, this time, Wasan realized that this peace was a sham.

Something out there still waiting to be discovered.

Something...that could easily bring this peace to an end.



"Pom! Hurry, throw it over, so we can get out of here!" Pom furrowed his brows annoyingly when he heard Kor's shout. He bent down to tie a trash bag he had just collected from the last beautiful house in alley number 2 of this extravagant housing estate. The only chance people like him could breathe in this atmosphere was to be here and collect the garbage onto the dustcart to be sorted

and eliminated. Pom threw the tied bag towards Kor without warning him.

"Hey!" Kor missed the trash bag, so it fell on the road. Its bottom was ripped and the things inside scattered out. "Pom! The bag is ripped apart, see!?"

"Ripped like a condom?" Pom laughed.

"It's not funny! Stop laughing. Help me collect them up now." Kor jumped down from the dustcart and stooped down to collect the debris leaked from the torn plastic bag. However, the more they tried to fix it, the more it leaked.

From the corner of his eye, Pom saw something fall out of the bag. It was an expensive shirt that was still in good condition and shouldn't be tossed away.

"Kor, look at this." Pom picked up the shirt and stretched it out. "Rich people's garbage."

Kor turned to look at Pom. He was about to scold that Pom was goofing off again, but what he saw made him stunned.

Pom quirked his eyebrows in question. "What is on...the shirt?" He turned it over. "It looks like coffee stains. I can wash it out."

"I think..." Kor snatched the shirt from Pom's hand. What he saw on the front of the shirt was a dry stain of dark brown liquid, splashing in small and large blots. Suddenly, something fell from the shirt pocket while Kor was turning it upside down. He bent down and picked it up. It was an ID card belonged to a man named Yongyuth.

"What is that?" Pom walked around to see what Kor had picked up before shouting. "Shit!"

"You know this man?"

"It's Yuth. He's a hospital guard who had just been killed. The murderer's still on the loose." Pom said, trembling. "How could his ID card end up here?"

"The stain on the shirt wasn't the coffee...but it's blood." Kor caught Pom's shoulder. "Which house this bag come from?"

Pom pointed to a beautiful two-story house he had just carried the bag out. "That one."

The hot air swept through them. They were standing in silence, looking at the house where Pom pointed his finger to.

They didn't know what to do for a good while until Kor spoke up with a trembling voice. "After work...we'd better...take the shirt to the police."

Chapter Twenty Four

Trophies of the Serial Killer

Wasan looked up at the place in front of him. It was a building with a sign in the front, saying 'S-Storage: Storage Facility for Rent.'

Wasan in his casual clothes came to the place where Gunn had previously come, but lied to him that he was at the hospital. He was surprised that the place he was looking at was a storage facility for rent. The only thing Wasan could think of was that Gunn must have hidden some secret in the place inaccessible to Wasan.

He walked into the area that looked like a simply-decorated office. He looked at the mirror door at the back of the office where a security guard was on his duty. There was also a keycard system door to fortify additional safety. Wasan pretended to be here to ask for some information.

"Hello, how may I help you?" A young female receptionist greeted Wasan with a smiling face.

"If I..." Wasan quickly made up a story in his head, "...want to rent a storage, what types of storage units do you have?"

The receptionist handed out a leaflet to Wasan. "We've various types of storage units, ranging from small ones at three square meters to bigger ones at 30 square meters. We also offer both indoor and outdoor containers, and small warehouse for rent."

Wasan nodded. "What about the security system?"

"We've around-the-clock security guard, and CCTV cameras covering all area. There's a keycard door at the entrance, and only

customers can access the facility. For your unit, you can use a lock you brought yourself.”

After hearing that, Wasan thought of how he could reach Gunn’s secret storage. First, he must know the number of Gunn’s unit. Second, he must have a keycard. Third, he needed a key that can open the unit smoothly as if he was its own renter. “I sell things online, but there is no space to store merchandises at my house. A doctor friend of mine recommended me here.”

“We’ve a diverse group of customers: merchants, farmers, engineers, and doctors.” Wasan already thought that the receptionist wouldn’t easily disclose the identity of other customers. There was no point trying to get this information. “If your merchandises need to be stored in climate-controlled storage units, we could also provide one.”

“Thank you so much. Let me think about it.” He thanked her before turning on his heels and leaving the office.

This was his new mission. He had to find a way to disclose Gunn’s secret by himself. And when he learned about the secret, he would decide for himself if he would choose righteousness, or allow himself to be in infatuation and protect Gunn so that they can stay together forever, regardless of whether Gunn had done something wrong.

A notification from his LINE message brought him back from his deep thought.

What he saw on his phone made his brain suddenly blanked out.

“What the hell?”



Gunn was a stubborn person who would never give up easily. As long as he was still breathing, he would not surrender and stay on the disadvantage end. At this point, he decided to risk his life, in order to obtain solid evidence and bring Somsak to justice before it was too late.

Did you really think I’d only save the photos on my phone?

Gunn in his black, long sleeve tracksuit and a grey cap walked out of a phone shop with a cheap secondhand smartphone in his hand. Today, he took a leave without prior notice, claiming that he was

unwell, so he can pursue his plan. He had bought a sim card and data package. Then, he created a new LINE account with a fake name, added Wasan's account, and sent the picture of Yongyuth's ID and his wallet with the location that the items were found, along with a message:

'A lead from an anonymous source. Please do not look for the source because it concerns his safety.'

'These were found in a desk drawer inside Dr. Somsak's house in the hospital staff residence. They're the things missing from the deceased guard. It's very suspicious. I beg the police to check out his house.'

Once the message was sent, Gunn disassembled the phone and put the parts in his backpack. He was certain that Wasan would read the message soon.

Gunn must gamble whether the result would be heads or tails. On one side, the police would raid into Dr. Somsak's residence, on the other side, the police wouldn't give any weight to this lead for whatever reason, and Somsak would realize this leak. Then, what Somsak had threatened might become true. Wasan and Gunn's lives might be in danger. But he trusted Wasan. A person like him wouldn't ignore a fishy thing like this.

A serial killer tends to keep a trophy to show his achievement, to admire, and to take great pride in the killings he had done. From the way he saw Somsak keep Yongyuth's wallet in a luxurious wooden box, it made him realize that Somsak might likewise keep trophies from his other victims. If Gunn could find those trophies, and they indicated every victim, this would be a checkmate from him.

The next place he would go finding more evidence was Somsak's most private place, which could be the place where he kept everything. Somsak's another house outside the hospital property.



Wasan rode a motorcycle as fast as he could to go back to the police station with his heart beating so hard, as if it was going to explode. His hands were shaking that he could hardly

control his vehicle, but he tried to compose himself until he reached the station. He rushed in, ignoring several pairs of eyes from other officers that were on him. Wasan was panting, restlessly looking for the sender of the message.

“Wasan.” Deputy Superintendent Bert called Wasan from his office, so he quickly turned and walked towards him.

“Deputy, issuing an arrest warrant of Gunn? What is the meaning of this?”

“That’s it. All evidence I’ve obtained points to the same direction. But what really catches him red-handed is a blood-stained shirt, with Yongyuth’s ID in its pocket. It was found in the trash can in front of Dr. Gunn’s house.” Bert stared at Wasan’s face, trying to catch any suspicion. “I’m going to ask a judge to issue an arrest warrant. You must do your best to collaborate with me. I still consider you as a witness at this time.”

Wasan body was numb like his whole body was soaked with cold water. “What...shirt? “

In Bert’s eyes, Wasan’s shocked expression couldn’t be fake. However, as he was the suspect’s lover, Bert must be careful of Wasan. “Don’t go anywhere. Wait here until I come back. If I cannot detain Dr. Guntapat, I might need your help, Inspector.”

Wasan’s gaze followed the Deputy Superintendent, who was leaving with Lieutenant Gawin. It was like Wasan’s energy was drained from his body. He pulled out his phone, intending to call Gunn to ask about what just happened. But he then saw LINE message notification from the unknown contact. He knitted his eyebrows before opening the application.

The voice around Wasan seemed to quiet down. He fell into deep thought and a state of confusion.

The picture was sent from an anonymous source, claiming to find Yongyuth’s wallet in Dr. Somsak’s residence, along with his ID card. Then, how could the ID card end up in the trash can in front of Gunn’s house today?

‘Who are you?’

Wasan replied without expecting an answer. Even if Wasan didn’t know who this anonymous source was, and how he or she obtained

this evidence, at least he had something to do to help Gunn. If Gunn was really not the wrongdoer.

Wasan was going to follow Bert and show him the LINE message, but someone blocked his path. A guy in a black jacket and black cap, who was rarely seen in the police station, gave him a smirk.

“Move, Lieutenant” Wasan tried to shove Kong out of his way, but Kong stood still while Bert and Gawin was leaving the station.

“Inspector. You’ve lied to me once. There’s a witness seeing the Doctor climbing and giving a lethal injection to a patient, which should be related to the death of Pharmacist Boze. And we also found a blood-stained shirt. I think he has reached his dead end. You should stay still. If you won’t stop, you might be accused of conspiracy.”

Wasan tried to calm down and not to react to Kong’s words. He took a deep breath to control himself from counterattack before picking up the phone and showing the picture he had just received to Kong. “Lieutenant, could you take a look at this? Someone sent this picture and the message to me.”

Despite his obvious bias against Wasan, Kong was a talented detective. Everything that came through his eyes would be scrutinized. The same thing could be said about this picture. Kong carefully examined it. “Who would be able to take a picture like this. We’ve no idea if it’s authentic. It might be a setup to blame Dr. Somsak.”

“That shirt might also be a setup.” Wasan pulled his phone from Kong’s hands and kept it in his pocket. “Now, there are two doctors’ names, why does everyone only focus on Gunn?”

“That’s because no one else has ever seen this picture. It’s kinda weird.” Kong put his hands in his pockets, still looking skeptical.

“Lieutenant Kong, let me speak one thing.” Wasan said, “I know how everyone looks at me, and you’re no different, but I want you guys to know that I’m a police officer who adheres to righteousness. Wrong cannot cease to be wrong. What I’m doing these days is to find the truth, not to conceal anything. “ Wasan paused for a moment. His face showed only sincerity. “My mom was one of Dr. Gunn’s patients who passed away not long after he’d looked after her. I admit

that I do really love him, but if my mom's death was caused by him, I'll be the one who handcuffs him and brings him to jail."

Kong's annoying expression that often made Wasan frustrated was now calm. Maybe Wasan was imagining things, but the light in Kong's eyes really showed some admiration for the first time since they had worked together. "Inspector, please send the photo and the message to me. I might find out something from them."

What Kong said far exceeded Wasan's expectation. "Thank you! When Dep. Supt. Bert come back, please call me." After sending the photo and the LINE message to Kong, Wasan disobeyed Deputy Superintendent's order by refusing to stay put at the police station.

He needed to ask Gunn himself.

Wasan was the only person who knew the location of Gunn's car. He must rush to find Gunn, who was going to be a suspect in murder cases soon, before other officers could locate him. Otherwise, there might be no chance for a private conversation.



Tonight, Dr. Somsak had a retirement party to celebrate with a retired senior doctor.

Previously, it might be the motion detector camera that sent a notification to Somsak's phone, so he quickly learned of an intrusion to his residence at the hospital property. Gunn didn't know whether this camera was installed at Somsak's another house.

However, Gunn must take this risk. He only needed a few more pieces of evidence to exculpate himself from the murder charge. A mere trespass charge was worth it.

Wasan had called Gunn ten times already.

He patiently looked at the caller's name in the dark. From Wasan's message that someone found a blood-stained shirt—with Yongyuth's ID in the pocket—in a trash can in front of his house, Gunn knew that Director Somsak did not keep his words.

What Somsak wanted was to find a scapegoat.

And it would be tough for the most suspected scapegoat like Gunn to fight this charge once arrested.

Gunn turned on the airplane mode and a voice recorder. He wore a black balaclava and adjusted his leather gloves. He used the darkness to disguise himself and headed to the beautiful house that was built in an area larger than half a Rai^[37].

A drawback of building a fancy house outside a housing estate was a lack of security.

Gunn easily walked past a gap between the fences and entered the area of the house. He ran towards the back door, which was a latch bolt door. He used the technique that he had practiced many times to pick the lock and entered to the kitchen. He looked above and saw a CCTV camera facing him. Gunn decided to take off his balaclava and looked at the camera with a daring face.

Without further ado, Gunn went straight to the room that seemed to be Somsak's study room and rummaged through everything. He couldn't be care less about how he would mess this place up. Every drawer was opened. Everything was scattered all over the place. Gunn quickly went through every files and books. When he didn't find anything useful at the desk, the next target was the most private room for everyone: the bedroom.

He ran to the second floor, opened the door of what he thought was the master bedroom, and turned on the light, no longer feared of getting caught. He then rummaged through every wardrobe and drawer.

Gunn found a box of condoms in a bedside table's drawer. Well, Dr. Somsak, who had divorced his wife for longer than ten years, was having a relationship with someone. The next thing Gunn found was a box that looked similar to the one used to keep Yongyuth's wallet. Gunn opened the box and found a gold key on top of red velvet. He picked up the key and looked closely at it before looking around for a thing that might fit this key.

There was a wooden cupboard conspicuously stood near the bathroom door. Gunn approached and opened it, but it was locked. So, he tried to use the key, and it fit perfectly.

He took a deep breath before slowly opening it. There were several wooden boxes beautifully displayed inside and the biggest box was in the center of the lowest shelf.

Gunn reached to the biggest box first. He slowly opened it with his rapid heartbeat, and he suddenly got goosebumps from head to toe.

Inside the box was a tray for medicine glass bulbs, the same style Pharmacist Boze possessed, the files that looked like copies of home visit palliative care patients, and a mobile phone.

These are trophies of the serial killer.

Chapter Twenty Five

Liberation as a Cure

"Are you on the afternoon shift?" Someone's gruff voice rang behind Boze, made him drop a prescription in his hands and it ended up flying under the table. He whipped around with a startled look.

"Y...yes, sir." Boze replied with a nervous, trembling voice.

How couldn't he react so? The person in front of him was Dr. Somsak, the hospital director, whom he had just met on the day he came to interview for a public servant position. Instead of choosing the best among the sea of talented and eloquent competitors who were all superior to him, Director Somsak chose Boze, who finished his pharmacy degree with unimpressive GPAs and didn't have any academic achievement to convince them.

Boze looked around the pharmacy room, so he could relax if there were other people. But, no one was there at the moment. There were only him and Somsak.

"How do you feel working here?" The middle-aged man, who couldn't be touched by time, pulled a chair to sit beside Boze. His eyes behind the glasses were warm. "Can I help you with anything else?"

"I'm...trying to adjust, Sir." Boze looked at the prescription on the floor, but he didn't stoop down to retrieve it for he was afraid he would upset the man before him. Somsak quirked his lips before bending down to retrieve the paper. Boze's eyes widened with panic. "Director, you don't have to!"

"That's ok." He handed him the paper with an appealing smile. "I'm willing to do it."

What moved Boze deeply wasn't this simple act, but Somsak's limitless kindness. He had taken a boy who went through many ordeals in life from a broken family to work in this provincial hospital. He had given him the opportunity to meet decent colleagues and environment, and to work in this arduous public service job.

So, that night, after Boze went off his afternoon duty, he easily became Somsak's guy.

"No one has ever hugged me like this," Said Boze, while he was lying in the 50-year-old man's muscular arms who was still stronger than many young men. "My parents have separated. I had to live with my alcoholic and psychotic mother. For my family, hugging isn't necessary."

"Now you have someone for a hug," Somsak stroked Boze's head. "Does that feel good?"

Boze nodded, looking up at the older man as if he fell under a spell. "Yes, very good."

"Remaining in someone's embrace would be better than being alone." Somsak raised Boze's hand and kissed it. "I also think that I've been alone for too long."



Today, Dr. Guntapat was going to give a lecture on palliative care from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The palliative care was the science that Boze had been interested in since he was a student. However, he had never had an opportunity to learn about this. Dr. Guntapat was a family physician who worked in this field, so it was an excellent opportunity for him to learn. Boze always took note of Dr. Guntapat's schedules and begged Somsak to request for approval from his supervisor to let him attend the lecture. This was the second time Boze had participated in the lecture.

Today, Dr. Guntapat would talk about a good death, a living will, and euthanasia.

What Boze learned from this lecture helped expand his worldview. Dr. Guntapat's words left him with a picture of a hospital that helped the terminal patients design their own death. No more suffering from their illness. For Boze, when the patients were in their final stage of life, prolonging their ends was like leaving them to suffer.

After the lecture, Boze approached Dr. Guntapat, who was busy packing the laptop. Boze watched him with admiration. "Doctor."

"Yes?" Dr. Guntapat looked up and gave him a smile.

Boze couldn't deny that Dr. Guntapat was so handsome that his heart skipped a beat.

"I'm Boze...um..." Boze scratched the back of his head shyly. "I want to tell you. I really like the way you give the lecture. It's easy to understand, and it can be used as guidance on several aspects."

"I saw you have attended the lecture twice," Dr. Guntapat said, "Are you interested in Pali?"

Boze nodded vigorously. "Very much."

"We need a multidisciplinary team to work on palliative care." Guntapat's smile looked even dazzling. "If you're free, how about coming to home visiting with me once. With your assistance, it'd help me a lot."

"Yes. I want to go." Boze was more than delighted. He immediately accepted the proposal without thinking.

"Okay, I'll have the home visiting team to contact you if we've a visiting case." Guntapat got to his feet with the laptop bag in his hand. He bowed slightly to excuse himself and left the meeting room.

Boze's delightful eyes followed Guntapat out of the room.

He hadn't noticed Somsak was staring at him silently from the corner of the room.



"Offering palliative care doesn't mean that we'd no longer try to treat the patients," Guntapat explained while they were in a van, on the way to visit the patient with gastric cancer, who had just left the hospital last week. Boze turned to look at Guntapat and listened to what he was saying intently. "We do treat them,

but our goal would be different by focusing on the quality of life, rather than curing the illness. That's because when the patients reach my hands, their illnesses are often in advanced stages, which are mostly incurable by then. However, it doesn't mean that I object to other treatment methods. If chemotherapy or surgery could help ease their pain and promote the patients' lives, I'll encourage such methods."

Boze didn't say anything. He was lost in thoughts with Dr. Guntapat's voice resounding in his ears. In his eyes, Guntapat was like an angel descending from Heaven. The Doctor's idea was similar to his. Boze wanted to express himself more. But because of his shyness, he could only nod, agreeing with everything Dr. Guntapat said and pondering on the ideas.

The patients Dr. Guntapat visited was Mrs. Yam, a 65-year-old woman who was diagnosed with a terminal stage of gastric cancer two months ago. By now, cancer had spread to the peritoneum and clogged her stomach, thus causing her pain and nausea. She couldn't eat anything until she was nothing but skin and bones.

Boze looked at her with pity, as she lay on the bed, unable to help herself. The only door awaited her was the door of death. But she was still lying in front of it, unable to cross over.

Dr. Guntapat dragged a chair to sit beside the patient, holding her hand. He talked to her with a gentle voice and asked about her discomforts to adjust the medicine.

"Help."

Boze heard the voice of the old lady near his ears, making him jump. He turned around but saw no one. There were only a nurse and a physiotherapist who was focusing on the patient.

"I want to die."

Boze turned to look at Mrs. Yam, who was looking at him at the moment. She didn't say anything, but Boze could hear her clearly. The sunken eyes on her gaunt face were looking at him and begging for help that no one else here could give her.

"Too much pain, kill me, please."

Boze flinched when the nurse touched his shoulder. He turned to look at her with a panicked face, and startled her in return.

"Are you alright, Boze?" The young nurse handed him a bag containing the patient's medicine. "This is the patient's medicine. Please, help me look at it."

"S...sure." Boze took the medicine bag and turned to look at the patient again. Now, she no longer looked at him, but she was listening intently to Dr. Guntapat, who spoke to her humbly and sweetly. Boze sat down, checked the medicine in a small plastic bag and wrote it down in the recording form. The home visiting on that day was over smoothly. It was so impressive.



"Ah!" Boze's back hit the bed at the same time the man put a pressure to squeeze his neck. He was helpless because both of his hands were tied behind his back by the man's necktie. Boze tried to turn away, but the muscular middle-aged man squeezed his jaw to force him making eye contact.

"Do you like him?" Somsak asked in an even tone, which was as cold as ice.

Boze frowned. "No...Professor"

"You want to sleep with him to know how it feels like, hmm?" Somsak pressed on the area that made a half-naked man struggled and cried out incoherently. "What shall I do to make you understand who you belong to? How can I show you who is the master here, so that you would stop wagging your tail to others?"

"I do not like him!" Said Boze, with a shaky voice. "I have never liked Dr. Gunn. I just...like...what he teaches."

"What have he taught you?" Somsak's lips were pressed next to Boze's ear. "Tell me."

"About terminal patients...the care approach...and...Professor, wait..."

"Go on."

Boze pressed his lips together as the pain almost made him lose his mind, but he went on as he was ordered. "The terminal patients, we s...should set a goal to provide them comfort and improve their quality of life."

The conversation was interrupted by the passionate fire that was blazing up. Somsak didn't allow Boze to speak anything for half an hour. His pale wrists that covered with red bruises were released afterward. His exhausted body could do nothing, except lying still on his stomach.

Somsak embraced him from behind. "Do you agree with Dr. Gunn?"

Boze opened his eyes. "About what?"

"The concept of palliative care."

Mrs. Yam's face returned to Boze's mind. It was the face contorted with excruciating pain. The look of the person who was begging him for death. "I think we could do something better."

Somsak turned up the corners of his mouth into a smile after hearing this. He kissed down Boze's shoulder and spoke with a gentle voice, unlike a moment ago, as if he were the different man. "We could do a lot better than Dr. Gunn. Boze, I'll take you to see what I can do for the patients," Somsak paused for a moment. "I don't want to see you with Gunn again. That man wasn't a good person as you think."



Yam passed away peacefully at 1.15 a.m.

Boze was the one who watched her stopped breathing.

He looked down at a syringe in his hand.

His hands had learned how to give an injection only a few times since it wasn't his responsibility. But this was the first time he felt like he was a real doctor.

He wasn't a doctor, but he was the liberator of pain.

He no longer heard Mrs. Yam's voice. She was at peace and didn't have to wake up to the pain any longer.

"Where can we find other patients?" Boze looked at Somsak, who was collecting the empty syringe that Boze brought back.

Somsak elaborately put the patient's name and hospital number on the syringe before gingerly placing it in a wooden box, as if it was a valuable item.

"There are two ways: the terminal patients in the medical ward and those who have returned home. Actually, we could ask to see the patients who are diagnosed as palliative cases, but the easiest way is to look into the home visiting cases in our hospital's responsibility. The patient files we keep have their details and addresses with written maps." Somsak brought the box back into the cabinet. "But, it's quite difficult to bring out the patient files from the home visiting office to photocopy them. So, I'll provide an office for Dr. Gunn especially to collect the palliative cases in one place. The office will be just like our all-you-can-eat restaurant. In the meantime, if I see any case deserve for liberation, I'll tell you."

"Professor...have you been doing this for a long time?"

"I've wanted to do this for a long time. I've just got a chance when we had an official palliative care physician." Somsak smiled. "I won't offer a position to someone without any reasons. In case one day I make a mistake, there would be someone to blame."

Boze gazed at the other man with mixed feelings—respect, love, as well as fear. "Why do you want to liberate those people from suffering?"

Somsak walked back and sat down on the edge of the bed. "My mother was a patient with terminal stage cancer. They inserted the tube into her throat and gave her a CPR even if it's her last moment." His gaze turned blank and he clenched his fists. "That empty-headed Doctor thought that prolonging her death was the best thing to do despite knowing fully well that prolonging such cases was pointless. Still they did it anyway."

That's right. Liberation was the best treatment.

Boze came to sit beside Somsak, embracing the person whose heart was still aching from losing his mother while she was immensely suffered. Boze gave him a kiss as a consolation.



"Idiot! Get it back now! Leaving the evidence like that, what would you do if the owner of the house gets suspicious!?"

Somsak's yell was still echoing in Boze's ears all the time he was hiding quietly behind the bushes, waiting for Nipon's rite to end.

When the decedent's daughter asked all the guests to return home after the reception, the door was completely shut, followed by the light that went out. Boze waited until he was sure that there was no movement in the house, then he climbed in through a window that certainly could be opened by using a crowbar to loosen up the bolts that loosely buried on the window frame, which was made of deteriorating wood. By doing this, tampering traces were even more evident than yesterday.

However, he had no choice. Yesterday, Nipon's daughter came back home unexpectedly early, resulting in his urgent attempt to escape from the house. He even accidentally dropped the syringe he used for the lethal injection, and it slipped under the cabinet. Somsak was furious and lashed out at him, ordering him to get this important evidence back before someone found it. Plus, Somsak wanted to collect it as a trophy for himself.

By sending him back to the crime scene for a second time...Somsak was crazy. That was very crazy.

Boze realized that the tampering would raise suspicion, so he came up with an idea. He would cover this up by making it seem like a burglary. He would throw the valuables to someone to be his scapegoat after retrieving the syringe from under the cabinet. Thus, he made sure he didn't forget to snatch the valuables he found, which were an amount of cash and a gold necklace, from a box on the cabinet.

He disguised himself in the darkness of the night when he left the house, with the syringe and the valuables in his bag. He knew that what he had done left many traces because he wasn't a pro, but he had no choice. Boze continued walking until he found the alley connected to the main road where he left his car. Before he left the lane, he saw a man sitting on a small wooden platform in front of a house. He was drinking a bottle of liquor as if it were a plain water. Boze pulled out the cash and gold from his bag and slowly approached the man.



"Boze, what happened to your face?" Pimpa turned to ask Boze, whose cheek was swollen like he was struck by something. He looked at the female pharmacist with a slight panic face before curving his lips lightly.

"I tripped this morning. It's nothing."

"Do you want painkillers?" His friend asked with concern.

Boze shook his head. "It's okay."

But actually, he wasn't okay...

Somsak had just found out that Boze used to talk with a man outside their profession. Even though they had stopped contacting each other for several months, and even he insisted that he wouldn't catch two fish with each hand^[38], Somsak still wanted to look through his phone. Then, Somsak found out that he recently chatted to this guy.

Boze put his hand on his cheek, which was throbbing and scorching hot at the moment. He liked Somsak's ideology, but sometimes, physical abuse might lead to the breaking point one day. Boze wanted to keep liberating the patients from their sufferings, but he no longer wanted to do it under Somsak's control.



Pharmacist Boze leaned his back against the wall behind the hospital building, where no one was passing by, and dropped himself down with a feeling like he was going to faint. He was panting heavily while turning to the direction where he had just run from.

Why did his liberated patient was taken to an autopsy?

Blood and urine samples from the body that Anun, the staff from the Forensic Department, was holding was like a time bomb for Boze. He collected his own blood and urine into the tube. He intended to switch his samples with the deceased's, but the evidence was tightly

sealed, signing over with Dr. Bunnakit's signature. There was no way for him to secretly switch the evidence under Anun's watch.

It was impossible anyway. Boze didn't even know what Dr. Bunnakit had collected from the body. It may be more than blood and urine. He would definitely be doomed.

"They would know...they would." Boze buried his hands in his hair. His anxiety at this time almost torn his heart apart.

This wouldn't work. The police would know it's me.

Boze shouldn't stay put without doing anything. Why must he be the one who suffered while the man who had led him into this path was sitting happily on the throne of the hospital's high executive?

The pharmacist tried to keep his discontentment inside. He knew he should be calm, but if this grievance kept burning in his chest, someday it might be so overwhelming that he had to find someone to share this truth.

The truth that might change his and Somsak's life forever.

Chapter Twenty Six

A Bloody Night

Although Gunn couldn't be reached at this time, Wasan knew where his car was. Only him knew it. He wouldn't tell Gunn's location to anyone, not until the arrest warrant was issued and Deputy Superintendent Bert forced him to speak. Wasan didn't consider this as a help to prevent Gunn from going to jail, but it was to put every unexplainable pieces of puzzle together before it was too late. While he had doubt in Gunn, he would give him a chance to explain one more time.

He only hoped that the man wouldn't lie to him again.

At this moment, Gunn's car was parked on the street in a residential area, about 20 kilometers out of the town. Wasan rode his motorcycle through the darkness, heading to the pinned location without delay. He still had no idea what that place was and why Gunn was there during nighttime.

After he turned into a small alley connected to the main street for a few hundred meters, he found the familiar car. He parked his motorcycle on the side of the road and hurried to look at the vehicle. It was locked, and Gunn wasn't in there. Wasan walked around the area to see if there was any place where Gunn might be, but he only saw a longan farm and quiet houses of the neighbors nearby.

The phone in his pocket constantly rang and vibrated as if someone was sending several photos through LINE chat. Wasan quickly opened the application and found that the person who had claimed to find Yongyuth's ID at Dr. Somsaks house just sent him 22 photos with the caption:

‘Found empty syringes with nametags of deceased patients and liquid antidepressants for injecting at Dr. Somsak’s house. Please come to inspect ASAP.’

What followed was a location of the place. When Wasan tapped open the map, he swore with frustration because the location was just the next alley. At this point, Wasan was certain that the person sending mysterious evidences was definitely not a stranger.

Guntapat! What the heck have you done?



Gunn quickly gathered everything back in the cupboard. He had found things that should interest Wasan enough. What he had to do next was to leave the place as fast as possible before Somsak came back. Gunn knew that Somsak certainly wouldn’t call the police to handle him because doing so would expose his secret. Gunn had the upper hand at this point and whatever he did would definitely benefit him.

The door creaked open, resounding like the sky was collapsing, caused Gunn’s excitement to quickly disappear. Gunn turned around and found the tall figure of the house owner standing and breathing heavily due to his haste to get here. Gunn prepared to stand and charge at Somsak to escape by force. However, what stopped him was the same weapon that had pointed at him once.

“You aren’t a good boy, Doctor.” Somsak said, trying to make his voice calm. “What should I do with you?”

Gunn raised both of his hands, slowly kneeled and stood up. He cautiously looked at the other man. “Professor...”

“You might think you found a thing needed to convict me. But let me tell you one thing. If you die right now, nobody would never see that evidence.”

“I already sent the evidence to the police.” Gunn said in a monotone.

Somsak firmly gripped a gun in his hand. His deadpan face turned into anger. “Don’t you think I don’t know what you’ve been doing.

Guntapat, whom everyone thought was a deity, actually was a murderer too!”

Gunn startled. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, Professor.”

“The first year that you’ve worked here. There was a 50-year-old patient named Mr. Rord Puangkaew.”

Gunn’s eyes widened slightly.

Somsak smirked when he saw that reaction. “Rord had been a friend of mine since high school. One day before he died, he’d called me, saying farewell and telling me everything.”

Gunn was apparently confused. “I remember Mr. Rord, but I don’t understand why you mentioned him...”

“You’re good at dodging, Doc. But whatever...” Somsak interjected. “Anyway, if I’ve to go to jail, so have you. But if you die here, my secret will remain hidden forever.”

“If you want to kill me, then do it. There’ll be a dead person in here to bring the police to search your house thoroughly. Then, they’ll know that it’s you. Especially when everything in that cupboard was captured and sent to the police already.” Gunn challenged without being afraid of death. He knew that it wasn’t a very smart move instigating the other man who could kill him at any moment. “You can’t escape.”

“If I’ll be caught anyway, killing one more person wouldn’t matter much!” Somsak aligned the gun sights without any hesitation.

That was when Gunn realized that he hadn’t truly been smart.

Within a split second, he decided to run into the bathroom while a loud gunshot roared and caused him to have a ringing in his ears. Fortunately, he wasn’t harmed from that opening shot.

As soon as he entered the bathroom, Gunn quickly locked the door and leaned his back against the wall on the same side. In the completely dark bathroom, Gunn’s heartbeat quickened in panic. His phone was lying on the floor outside, so he was unable to contact anyone for help.

Bang!

The brown wooden door was penetrated by a bullet.

Gunn shuddered and moved away from the door. He swore to vent out his terror, and tried to look for a way out before Somsak

would successfully break through the door or open it with a key. He then saw a small window above the bathtub. Maybe he could try to escape through that window.

Bang!

This shot broke the shower stall into pieces.

Gunn growled out and retreated to his previous spot. Was he really going to die in this place? He started to hesitate whether it was worth risking his life.

“Put your weapon down now!”

Someone’s voice boomed out, making Gunn feel chilly throughout his entire body as if it was being frozen. He looked at the door that had a light coming through a bullet hole and slowly walked towards it with his shaky legs.

“Inspector, you’re being mistaken.”

“Put the gun down now!”

Gunn was familiar with that voice, more familiar than anyone else. It was the voice of his special guy, his cohabitant, the man who hugged him, and the man he loved wholeheartedly. Gunn quickly looked through the hole at the door and what he saw was quite shocking.

Wasan in casual attire was standing in front of the bedroom. A gun in his hand was aiming to where Somsak stood while Somsak was standing near the headboard; one hand was holding a key, which should be used with the bathroom, and the other hand was holding a gun. It wasn’t being aimed at Wasan.

“Wasan!” Gunn shouted out to let the other man know that he was trapped in there.

Wasan glanced at the call before quickly returning his attention to Somsak, not to lose sight of him.

“It was self-defense, Inspector.” Said Somsak. “He broke into my house like he was going to steal my stuff. When I arrived, he’s poised to attack me, so I’m just defending myself.”

“That wasn’t true, Wasan! He tried to kill me!” Gunn quickly objected.

“We can discuss the details later. Put the gun down now.” Wasan spoke with a harsh tone.

Somsak threw his gun on the bed and slowly raised his hands.

“Gunn, you can get out now.”

Gunn gradually turned the doorknob and opened the door.

Wasan looked at him out of the corner of his eye. He practically ignored Gunn because he was paying attention to Somsak’s movement.

Gunn had a lot of questions in his head. He just sent the location of this place no longer than five minutes, and Wasan had already arrived here now. Another thing was that he didn’t seem surprised to see Gunn here.

“Dr. Guntapat intruded my house. He’s the one who should be arrested, not me.” Somsak spoke and then pointed at the other man. “He’s a murderer, not a good person like you think, Inspector.”

“Wasan, don’t believe him!”

“I’ll talk to you guys about that at the police station. Other officers are on their way here.” Wasan cautiously walked towards the bed that had the gun on it. “Doctor, please step away from the gun.”

Somsak stepped back until his back pressed on a wooden cupboard with a drawer that was left opening. While Wasan was extending his hand to get Somsak’s gun, something told Gunn that this was too easy. Gunn’s instinct warned him that danger was afoot. Somsak’s was an evil-minded person, anyway.

Reading the situation, Gunn thought that Somsak didn’t have other choices but to escape before other officers arrived. The only way out was to get rid of the people in front of him now.

The moment Wasan’s fingers nearly touched the gun was the same time as when Somsak lowered his hands to grab something in the drawer behind him and quickly aimed it at Wasan.

It wasn’t strange for a person like Somsak to have two pistols. However, they had never thought of this possibility, and Gunn admitted that he was a foolish. Now, the only thing Gunn could think of in this situation was—saving Wasan.

His long legs stepped out once he saw Somsak picking something out of the drawer. When two gunshots were fired from two directions, Gunn jerked Wasan into his embrace and took a bullet for the man he loved.

Both of them fell to the floor. Wasan wasted no time panicking. The first thing he did was to distance himself from the body on top of him. His eyes widened when he saw blood pouring out from the wound on Gunn's right shoulder blade and dripping on the floor.

"Gunn," Wasan spoke with a dry throat. He touched his shoulders and Gunn frowned with a great pain.

Gunn was wheezing.

"Gunn!" He tightly hugged him. Wasan's eyes were wide open with shock. He looked around before he could regain his composure.

"Gunn, wait for me here. I'll be back." Wasan hurriedly left Gunn to look at the guy who was the threat to both of them.

Somsak was lying on the floor, trying to pull himself up. Wasan's bullet probably hit his abdomen.

"Inspector!" Sounds of footsteps and calling of patrol officers who had just arrived made Wasan feel relieved. He turned to the armed, uniformed officer.

"Please keep an eye on Dr. Somsak. I'm going to look after another wounded guy."

One of the officers nodded and entered the room while reporting the situation via his radio. Wasan rushed back to Gunn. He sat next to the body lying on his side. Gunn was still conscious, but the pool of blood on the floor worried Wasan. He gently supported Gunn's head and placed it on his lap.

Wasan smoothly patted Gunn's cheek. "Gunn, stay with me. Stay strong. The ambulance will soon arrive. You're a doctor. You need to be strong. Do you understand?"

"You...are okay...?" Gunn spoke incoherently, feeling fatigued as if he had run a marathon. He could diagnose himself right away that the bullet probably went into his chest.

"You don't have to worry about me!" Wasan took off his black T-shirt, left only his singlet, and pressed it on the wound to stop the bleeding. "Don't you say another word."

Gunn admired Wasan's presence of mind, his fierceness, and his decisiveness in a situation like this. Although the gunshot wound was hurt so bad, touches and eyes full of concerns from Wasan were like first-class medicine. He closed his eyes, trying to meditate to stop

focusing on his pain. He heard several footsteps coming to this room. Soon after, he heard a siren approaching while his consciousness started to be hazy.

“The ambulance is here.” Wasan gently patted Gunn’s head. “Don’t die! If you die, I’d never forgive you.”



Wasan was sitting in front of the operating room. His state was quite frightening for people around him. He still wore the same blue jeans and white singlet on which Gunn’s blood stained in red blotches. He had been here for longer than half an hour, praying for a smooth operation.

He raised his head when he saw a pair of sneakers stopped next to him, and saw a familiar face in the black leather jacket and black cap.

“Yongyuth’s wallet and phone were found in Dr. Somsak’s hospital residence.” Lieutenant Kong plopped himself down next to Wasan. “Not only that, Pharmacist Boze’s phone was also found in his bedroom.”

Wasan had a look of surprise on his face. “Everything is connected. The person who sent me the photos was Guntapat. He was crazily looking for evidence without telling me. Why did he do that?”

“You might’ve to ask him yourself when he recovers.” Kong pointed his chin to the operating room’s door before taking off his jacket he was wearing over his T-shirt and handing it to Wasan. “Inspector, you should wear this.”

Wasan looked at the kindness that Kong offered him with a surprise, but he accepted and wore it over his bloodstain singlet with gratitude. “Thank you, Lieutenant.”

“Everyone has a secret.” Kong looked outside a window. “I myself has a secret that I’ve buried deep away from everyone. I even spit on it to hide that the thing underneath is mine.”

Wasan looked at Kong and arched his eyebrow. “What are you talking about?”

“The way you looked at the operating room makes my heart hurt.” The man raised his hand to pat his chest before smiling lightly. “You aren’t afraid to reveal who you are and face with the obstacles resolutely. Meanwhile, I keep my secret because I’m a coward. It makes me question myself what I’ve been doing.”

Wasan started to understand what Kong was saying. “It isn’t wrong that you’re afraid because everyone has his own situation to handle. I choose to reveal it because I have no choice, but if you do, choose what is best for you.”

“I like a guy.” An out-of-the-blue remark answered everything. The way Wasan looked at Kong started to change. Kong sniffed loudly before continuing saying, “What do you think I should do, Inspector?”

“You already knew the answer.”

Wasan saw a smile from Kong that he hadn’t seen before. Both of them sat quietly for a while before the younger guy took off his cap.

“Would you like me to sit with you until Dr. Gunn is out from surgery?”

“I’m okay. There should be tons of work to deal with. When the operation is complete, and Gunn is safe, I’ll take a shower, change my clothes and go to the police station right away. I’ll return your jacket there.”

Kong nodded and stood up. “If there is any further development, I’ll let you know.”

“Aha.” Wasan looked at Kong who bowed to him before leaving.

The atmosphere between the two officers had apparently changed. The feeling of hatred between them disappeared as if it had never existed. The shirt that Kong lent to Wasan was like a friendship offer. Wasan was thrilled that everything seemed to head to the right direction. Hopefully, Kong and him would be good colleagues after this.

Chapter Twenty Seven

A Love Confession

Mayuree went back to record the patient's vital sign in her responsible Surgical ICU room. There were five patients lying in beds. One of them was Guntapat Akaramaytee, who was now the talk of the town. The middle-aged nurse looked up at the patients' family members who started to come in to see their loved ones on the visiting hours. One of them was the officer in the uniform. Mayuree knew right away which bed he came for a visit.

"That's him." One of the young nurses walked to whisper into Mayuree's ears. "Dr. Gunn's boyfriend."

"What are you excited about? It's an old story. Go back to your work." Mayuree scolded at the younger nurse before looking at the officer, who was standing next to Bed Number 2, in which Dr. Gunn was lying.

Despite his weary smile, Gunn expressed absolute delight, which made Wasan's heart swell. Gunn looked like shit, but he was far from a critical patient as he was described.

"Hey," Wasan greeted the patient.

Gunn frowned a little when he moved. Now, he wore a sling on his right arm and had a ventilator's line connected from his right chest. There was also IV line and other medical lines all over him. "It's hurt..." Gunn's rasping voice sounded adorable.

Wasan held Gunn's left hand and squeezed it gently. From what Wasan had asked from the nurse, Gunn was off the danger list at the moment. Somsak's gunshot broke Gunn's right scapula, and the bullet penetrated the upper right chest cavity, causing the air to leak.

Luckily, only a temporary Ventilator's line was needed. All of these were considered serious injuries, but Gunn was strong and healthy to begin with, so he could still smile at Wasan. "You're still smiling?"

"Glad to see you." Despite his lack of strength, Gunn tried to pull Wasan's hand for a kiss. Wasan let him do it without any protest. "Have you eaten yet, Babe?"

"Not yet. I come to see you first and then I'll find something to eat." He pulled a chair nearby to sit next to him. "I want to tell you that we've found something on Yongyuth's phone that might be a cause of his death." He pulled out his phone. "You've asked Yongyuth to monitor the closest CCTV camera to your office. And he might've seen this on a footage of the night two days before the day you asked him a favor. Yongyuth was probably waiting to tell you, but it's too late because Dr. Somsak was somehow aware of it."

Wasan showed Gunn the picture taken from the CCTV monitor, revealing the image of a man walking by the camera at night. His appearance resembled Somsak. The man came out of the office with a file in his hands which Gunn could immediately tell that it was the home visiting patient's file in his office. "No wonder...my nurse usually complains about the misplacing files..."

"Ornanong, right?"

"Yes...Nong is my nurse. Somsak was able to take my stuff...and leave it in the crime scene...without any difficulties."

"The pen?"

"I'm positive...that he deliberately took my pen to the house of the deceased...then took the blood-stained shirt...and leave it in front of my house..." Gunn paused to catch a breath. "By the way, how is he?"

"My shot cut through his vessels in his stomach. Somsak lost a lot of blood that he's in shock. Even though he's out of the surgery, I couldn't interrogate him because he's still unconscious. He's put on a breathing tube in a separate room there." Wasan sighed. "You too. I won't ask you anything much right now because you're badly hurt. But when you recover, there will be a serious interrogation for you too."

"Gladly," Gunn whispered a reply.

"In the meantime, you can think of good answers about why you did what you did."

"I admit that I was wrong by investigating the matter by myself. And I failed. Director Somsak caught me red-handed. He used your life to threaten me." Gunn reached to touch Wasan's cheek. "I'm glad...that you're safe."

"But I'm not happy that you took the bullet for me. I was angry with you about this and about what you did behind my back. I was so angry that I didn't want to talk to you. Don't want to see your face. I thought I wouldn't come here to visit you, letting you feel guilty that you've done all the things without listening to me..." Wasan looked at Gunn tiredly. "But I couldn't."

"I'll make it up to you." Gunn looked at him with eyes filled with love.

This might be the first time Wasan was able to see the real Guntapat without any invisible wall. That wall was destroyed in the moment Gunn selflessly took the bullet for him. At that time, if it weren't for Gunn, the person lying here would have been him, or he might not be so lucky to be lying on the hospital bed, but instead, in a coffin.

Wasan smiled. It was a smile that anyone wouldn't have a chance to see it often. "This charge is a life sentence."

"My whole life...is yours." Gunn's voice was getting weaker, but he tried to gather his last strength and then spoke out clearly, "I love you..."

There was a silence after that statement.

Wasan lowered his head and let out his breath through his nose. Then, he lifted his face to bashfully look at the man, who had just confessed his love to him. "Say the word again when you recover."

"Oh...Wasan..." Gunn closed his eyes and growling slightly in his throat. "Why do you have to be so cute? I want to carry you to bed, removing your clothes and make love to you right now."

Wasan hurriedly looked around to check whether someone overheard Gunn's words before turning back to Gunn with a disapproval growl. "You! This isn't the time to be a pervert!"

Although they could only touch each other by hands, this touch, however, was far more profound than any touches they'd shared.

Wasan could sense that Gunn's love confession came genuinely from his heart.

The gunshot wound on Gunn's shoulder was a sign indicating that he was ready to give his entire life to Wasan. In return, Wasan would reciprocate what Gunn had done for him the best he could. He would put his effort on Dr. Somsak's murder case to prove everyone that his lover was innocent, and everything Gunn did was because he really didn't have any choices.



"Cooked water chestnuts, anyone? Cooked water chestnuts, five bucks for a small package, ten bucks for a big one." The merchant's voice drew Kong's attention, and he turned to look that way.

"Do you have to sell it now? Come on, don't jinx it!^[39]" Kong mumbled and adjusted his uncomfortable collar. The merchant must have noticed Kong's frustration, as well as his uniform, so he hurriedly walked away with a basket of cooked water chestnuts.

That's right, Police Sub-Lieutenant Kong was now in the police uniform—due to the necessity of his work. He hoped to surprise the person he was waiting to see.

Around 4.30 p.m., Tum would leave the Medicine Department building with several tote bags. However, when the time came, Tum wouldn't even look at Kong. He kept walking. His eyes fixed on the ground as if they didn't know each other. This upset Kong a little.

"Hey!" He called Tum, making him flinch a little and then turned his head back to Kong.

Tum's large eyes widened with surprise. He looked at Kong from head to toes as if he didn't believe in his own eyes.

"Lieutenant Kong?" He blinked his eyes.

"You couldn't remember me? I'm hurt." The tall officer approached Tum and sent him an annoying smile Tum was familiar with.

"Lieutenant Kong is so handsome! I know you want to say it out loud, then say it."

Tum showed a look of disgust on his face. "What a narcissist."

Kong burst out his laugh.

Tum must admit that when Lieutenant Kong was in his uniform—with a tall, muscular build, fitting with the police uniform—he wasn't like the man hiding in the shadow anymore. Kong's cropped-short hair wasn't covered by the black cap which he usually wore, revealing his handsome face. Most of the passerby was looking at him. Tum was so annoyed at the sights of people around him. He wanted to stay far away from this man more than anything.

"You're already off the shift. Let's go find something to eat." Kong asked him with the tone that seemed like a command rather than an invitation.

"I've another engagement...."

"Tum!" After hearing another man's voice, Kong's smile faltered immediately.

The man in a short lab coat, embroidering with the abbreviation, 'M.D.' on his coat, came to Tum with a smile that could brighten up the world. He seemed warm-hearted, kind, and generous. His skin was fair and clean. "Sorry, I thought the OPD would let me out sooner."

"It's okay. I just got off my shift as well." Tum turned to look at Kong. "Excuse me, Lieutenant Kong."

That physician slightly bowed to Kong. Then, both of them turned around and walked out of the building, leaving Kong to stand still as if he was cursed into stone. When he regained his conscious, he walked out the door with indignation. He wanted to scold that merchant, but it would be pointless. It wasn't the merchant's fault that the person he liked hated him. It was his fault to make Tum hate him from the very first moment. Moreover, his rudeness and wicked behaviors had never once brought a happy smile to Tum's face. All he'd received was either Tum's annoyance or rejection.



"Lieutenant Kong, why so blue?" Lieutenant Gawin came to greet his colleague, who was sitting on the bench in front of the police station with a long face. "Even if I draft the case files all night, I wouldn't look as horrible as you now."

"Drafting the case files all night is incomparable to being heartbroken. My heart suffers more than your hands." Kong said and pounded his chest with his fist. "Am I not worth associating with, Lieutenant Guin?"

"Do you want me to be honest?" Gawin plopped himself down next to him. "No, you're not. No one would go out with you on a date."

"Ouch." Kong feigned a painful face.

"But I think that being like this is one of your charms. You like to act annoying around people, even though you're a smart and capable guy. Unfortunately, they hate you before they like you. Try to bring out more of your cleverness and virtue." He squeezed Kong's shoulder. "I'd failed many times before I got her heart. But in the end, I got it. Do you know why? Because I'd proved myself that she could count on me. On the day she faced with the hardest difficulty in her life, I decided that I had to be there for her. That's the turning point."

Kong swatted Gawin's hand away. "You're handsome inside out, is that what you're saying?"

"So, are you still flirting with the nurse?"

"Yes, the same one."

"I bought her something to eat during her night shift. This is the most important act. When she's hungry, tired, sleepy, and then she receives comfort from the foods you bring her. Simple but effective. Oh, and women love dessert." Gawin smiled broadly. "This is the advice from the guy who has achieved his goal. It's up to you, buddy. I've got to get back to work. I have to interrogate the witnesses in Dr. Somsak's case. Bye-bye."

Kong was about to ask him something, but Gawin had already got to his feet and left. Gawin's advice seemed interesting, but that was for courting ladies, which was not exactly compatible with his situation.

Ever since he was young, Kong had never been in a serious relationship. He used to have a crush on someone, but he didn't

know how to approach them, except making them annoyed and then dashed away. Tum wasn't the first guy Kong had liked, but Tum was the first guy who made him decide to overcome his fear. The fear of being looked down upon when people learned he was romantically attracted to someone of the same gender.

He must admit that Wasan's courage was his inspiration. Inspector Wasan made him think that there was nothing to fear. The scariest aspect was losing the person he loved. He felt guilty that he had used to treat Inspector Wasan poorly. However, this time, he might need Wasan's assistance to help him get through this terrible feeling.



"Dr. Somsak has been working in this provincial hospital for twenty years. He got the position of the hospital director three years ago." Wasan was standing in front of the board displaying information, portraits, and pieces of evidence that were formed as a diagram for an easy understanding. The audience was every officer responsible in this case.

"He was married to Dr. Kwanhatai. They have one daughter and has been divorced ten years ago. At present, his ex-wife and his daughter live in another province. After the divorce, Dr. Somsak has never had any relationship with women. Until five years ago, there were rumors that he liked to approach good-looking guys in the hospital. Therefore, people then said that he might be homosexual."

"Who can confirm this?" Asked the Deputy Superintendent.

"All hospital staff who has been working here for more than five years can insist on this," Wasan answered and continued. "After Dr. Somsak had become the hospital director, Dr. Guntapat, who got a medical specialist scholarship from the hospital, returned to be a family physician after his graduation. Dr. Somsak promptly assigned Dr. Guntapat to take care for terminal stage patients. And then, Dr. Somsak first victim appeared—Mrs. Pin Lahma."

Wasan picked up a plastic bag containing the piece of evidence inside. It was an empty syringe with the patient's name label. "Dr. Somsak has collected every syringe that was used to kill the terminal stage patients."

"What is his motive?" Bert continued with the questions.

"The motive isn't clear; it's just only assumption. What we've gathered so far is that Dr. Somsak likes to control other people's lives. He might've seen himself as the liberator who can free people from suffering. The next question is that even if being a doctor all his life, why has he just started doing this three years ago?" Wasan used the pen to point at Gunn's image.

"Because it was the year that he became the Director. It'd be easy to manage everything. Also, it was the first time the hospital had recruited a palliative care specialist. He could make Dr. Guntapat a scapegoat immediately whenever he made any mistakes."

Everyone in the room went silent. Wasan knew what they were thinking. "I'm not protecting Guntapat. I just said what I've seen. If anyone sees this differently, you're always welcome to contradict the evidence in my hands."

"Why did Dr. Guntapat have to be all secretive and run around to find evidence on his own without telling anyone?" Lieutenant Kong raised his hand to ask.

"There's another issue about a psychiatric patient named Som. He insists he saw Dr. Guntapat climbing into a house and kill someone, not Dr. Somsak." Bert rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"But can we rely on a crazy man, Deputy?" Kong argued. Wasan was surprised that it seemed like Kong was trying to help him. "Should we save it as the lowest reliable evidence? Besides, the evidence in Dr. Somsak's house is quite clear."

"About what Som saw, we've an obligation to investigate on the matter further." Wasan noted this down on the board. "Anyway, from what I gathered when I visited Gunn, the reason why he tried to investigate this matter on his own was he started to feel like he's being framed. He wasn't sure who was behind it, though. So, he tried to find out by himself and realized that it was Dr. Somsak. He was about to collect the evidence and give it to the police to protect his

innocence before Somsak wised up. However, Dr. Somsak had found out before Gunn could do anything with them. He also threatened to harm Gunn and I, so Gunn had no choice. We should know about the details when he recovers.”

Wasan walked to the other side of the board to point at the picture of Chanchai, aka Boze. "Boze started working here one year ago. His colleagues confirmed that he's gay. He had been contacting a man, but his colleagues couldn't identify who he was. And then Boze was found dead by hanging. Mr. Anun, the staff of the forensic lab, said that he caught Boze acting suspiciously when he was delivering the evidence collected from the late cancer patient, who had a seizure in front of me. When I found out that the patient was given an overdose until he passed away, I went to the pharmacy room to inquire some information from Boze. He behaved suspiciously, and soon after that, I was assaulted and had been injected with the same drug he used with the patient.”

Next, Wasan pointed at Dr. Somsak's image. "After we've examined Boze's phone found in Dr. Somsak's bedroom, we've found their couple photos. It can be concluded that they're in a relationship, and Dr. Somsak might be the one who killed Boze. I guess that Boze was killed because Somsak knew he had sneaked in to attack me and he was scared that Boze might be arrested and he'd be implicated in the murders.”

"The reason Dr. Somsak murdered Yongyuth to silent him can be inferred from the decedent's belongings found in his residence and the photos in Yongyuth's phone that captured his activity. After that incident, the CCTV footages were all erased and he deliberately forged the evidence to frame Guntapat for every murder he committed to divert the police attention.”

Wasan took a deep breath. "Therefore, it could be inferred that the deaths of Pharmacist Boze, Yongyuth, and the lethal injections given to terminal patients were all related, and it came from one man: Dr. Somsak.”



After the meeting, Kong walked into Wasan's office and sat opposite to him. Wasan was concentrating on a document in his hands. He glanced up at his guest, and then he seemed to remember something.

"Well, here's your shirt." Wasan picked up a paper bag sitting next to the desk and handed it to Kong. "I washed out the bloodstain."

"I'm about to ask for it." Kong reached out and nodded at the bag in Wasan's hand. "The atmosphere reminds me of the famous case we had before you moved here. Miss Janejira's murder. That case was such a mystery that it gave everyone a headache."

"I've heard about that case too." Wasan looked at Kong, who seemed to have something to say but didn't utter it out. "You didn't come here just to ask for your shirt, right?"

Kong rubbed his face and let out a sigh. "I want your opinion on something. If you don't mind, please have dinner with me."

"Asking me out for a dinner? You do realize that I already have a boyfriend, right?"

"I know. I'm well aware of that." Kong quickly raised his hand to stop Wasan's thought. "I just want your help on something. That's all."

"Tomorrow evening, if I finish my case files by then, I'll be available."

"Okay, then we both are available." Kong stood up. "Please come, okay?"

"Sure. Um, Lieutenant, I want your help with the information from Som. Help me find out what actually happened. Is his information the truth? Does anyone else saw what he saw?"

"Yes, sir." Then, Kong quietly disappeared from the office.

Wasan sighed at Kong's sudden friendliness before returning to the document before him. It was the list of the deceased patients whose names were labeled on the empty syringes that were found in Somsak's house. On the list, there were dates, times, places, and causes of their deaths specified in the certificate of deaths. It had started three years ago. The pattern was unidentifiable. The time of death depended on when the patients' family members found out their deaths. Most of the scene was at home, only three cases happened in the hospital.

Among them, Wasan's deceased mother, Mrs. Rawewan, didn't appear on the list.

Chapter Twenty Eight

The Real Guntapat

Wasan offered Gunn a helping hand while he was trying to stand next to his bed. A drainage tube connecting to his chest was removed yesterday. At this point, he was free of all but a right arm sling. When he stood firmly on his feet, he took a deep breath and smiled with an uncharacteristically cheerfulness.

“How are you?” Wasan looked up.

“Should be able to go home soon.” Gunn turned to smile at Wasan. “Good encouragement leads to speedy recovery like this.”

“Don’t talk too much. Sit back down.” Wasan pulled the wheelchair near him and held it still while Gunn was sitting on it. “Are you sure I can go with you?”

“Absolutely.” Gunn slowly sat before turning to nod at Wasan. “The nurse in this ward gave me no more than an hour. We should go now.” Gunn had asked Wasan to bring him to the medical ward in Male Internal Medicine.

Wasan in a casual attire pushed Gunn’s wheelchair into the ward. All nurses’ eyes were staring at them, but no one seemed surprised by Gunn’s appearance as if they had already expected him. A nurse with a chart in her hands approached Gunn. She greeted Wasan, and he awkwardly returned the gesture.

“There’s been a drop in blood pressure, right? Nong.” Gunn looked up and asked the nurse.

She nodded.

“Yes, Dr. Gunn. He also has urinary retention today.”

“Should be within a matter of days.” Gunn turned his head to Wasan. “Please bring me to Bed Number 12.”

He pushed the wheelchair passing patients lying in the Internal Medicine Ward. It must be a familiar scene that Gunn had to face every day, but for Wasan, who didn’t work here, the scene was depressing. Wasan looked at the patient whom Gunn asked him to bring him to. He was an emaciated man who was lying still and presented with acute dyspnea. His bulging eyes were staring at the ceiling.

Gunn looked at the numbers on the monitor, which was constantly making noise.

“We should turn off the monitor, so the patient can have a good rest. I’ll give him a low amount of morphine through his vein to reduce his tiredness.” Nong nodded and reached out to turn off the monitor. This made the area more peacefully quiet. “Nong, please write a prescription per my instruction. My hand still can’t write”

“Sure.”

Wasan looked at Gunn, who was prescribing a drug dose to the nurse. After she finished writing, she walked to the nurse station to convey what Dr. Gunn wanted for his patients. Gunn asked Wasan to push him closer to the patient’s bed. The Doctor, who was currently a patient himself, reached out to touch the old man’s hand and spoke with a tone Wasan had never heard before.

“Mr. Nopparat, this is Dr. Guntapat. I apologize that I didn’t visit you at your house as promised.” He smiled softly. “As for your wish that you wanted to wait until your nephew’s commencement, I see that you’ve done that. Nong has sent a picture that you took with your nephew to me.”

Wasan arched his eyebrows. He had never seen a doctor paying attention to every detail of a patient this way before. So he continued paying attention to the conversation.

“Now, you’ve nothing to worry about. I want you to concentrate and think about the good things that you’ve done. You told me that you’d volunteered to support flood disaster relief. Do you still remember? I want you to think of that moment. Think of the good

feelings that you've received from making merits, being a shelter for people who suffers."

Wasan got goosebumps when he saw the patient's protruding eyes gradually close, looking so peaceful without taking any medicine.

Gunn held the patient's hands more firmly before he went on saying, "I'll give this time to you and your family. I'll tell the nurse to call your family members to be with you now." He glanced at Wasan, "Let's go, Wasan."

Wasan fell into deep thought throughout the way back from the Internal Medicine Department. The image of Gunn when he was gently holding the patient's hand was so impressive and memorable. When they entered the elevator, Gunn said. "I just want you to see how I work. So, you'll know me more in this role and trust me more."

"Hmm, I've seen you work." Wasan was silent for some time. "Why don't you wait until you're better before checking on the patients? Or you can ask another doctor to look after your cases."

"I've known him for six months. He's been my patient since when he still can help himself. He hasn't taken his terminal stage cancer very well. He's so depressed and dismal that he was suicidal. The Surgery Department let me take over the case. I used a special tool, namely a good relationship between a doctor and a patient, to help him overcome that depression and live until his nephew's graduation. And now, he doesn't have any unfulfilled wish left, so I want to say goodbye to him myself."

"What kind of doctor are you?" He grumbled. "You do something more than other doctors. Seems like your practice is using a combined knowledge, not only the medication."

"Exactly, I'm a doctor specializing in treating patient's disease, spirit, society, family, and mind."

Wasan stood still for a while. "You also took care of my mom like this, right?"

Gunn nodded. "Yes, I looked after your mom's physical, mental, and spiritual condition."



During that dinner, Wasan told Kong that he shouldn't be afraid because what he feared would definitely happen anyway. If he was certain that he was ready to tackle the problems in the future, then he should listen to his heart.

The pineapple-eyed detective thought that he was ready, but he wanted one more thing to be verified.

Who was the man that picked Tum up on that day?

The guy in a black leather jacket and a cap stood in a blind spot of the personnel parking area. His sharp eyes stared at the physician in a clean white lab coat who was walking to his car. The license plate indicated that it was registered in Chiang Mai, which meant he was from a nearby province. His relationship with Tum was still unknown, but it shouldn't be difficult to find out.

A female janitor, Tip, screamed softly when she saw a man waiting for her in front of a medical device cleaning room. "Lieutenant Kong!"

"Long time no see, *Beauty*." Kong raised his hand and touched his cap in greeting. "You've more curves."

The small janitor stood with arms akimbo, looking at the man in front of her with a not-so-thrilled face. "What information do you want now?"

"What is the relationship between Dr. Poramet and Tum?" He jumped straight to the point.

Tip raised her eyebrows slightly. "What will I get for this information?"

"300 Baht."

She immediately opened her palm, waiting for her 300 Baht.

Kong let out a sigh before picking out three red bills and placing them on Tip's hand. She was joyful and swiftly kept the money in her pocket.

"Now, tell me."

"Dr. Por is apparently courting Tum. They aren't together yet but talk to each other a lot." Tip gestured Kong to move his face closer and whispered, "Not sure why Tum hasn't agreed to date Dr. Por."

He's so handsome and is soon-to-be a surgeon. It seems like Tum has fallen for someone else."

"Is that so?" If the information came from Tip, it might not be so much credible. But she was a great source in this hospital. She knew everything that was going on around her. And because she was friendly, hospital staff always talked to her on a wide range topic. "Has Tum mentioned whom he liked?"

"I heard that there's another guy who brought him foods at the ward, but I didn't know who he was." Tip moved away after she finished talking. "By the way, in what case are Tum and Dr. Por involved? Why are you pulling this information from me?"

"Kong has a serious charge." Kong sucked his lips. "So serious that I've to catch him myself. Thank you for the information, Sweetie."

An expression of shock appeared on Tip's face while he left swiftly. Kong must arrest Tum for the serious charge that he could not forgive: stealing and beating Kong's heart.



"Shit! What the hell! Lieutenant Kong, you did this again! "

While he was heading to his room, a tall man in a black jacket lurked behind him quietly and suddenly touched his shoulder, making him flinch.

"Hey, Love, why haven't I seen you lately? Are you avoiding me? "

"When will you leave me alone?" Tum raised his voice impatiently. "Shouldn't we've gone on our ways? Stop sneaking around like this."

"Wow, that's a long rebuke...Wait." Kong rushed in to block Tum's path. Tum was about to scold him again, but he abruptly paused when Kong handed him something. "I've got a chance to know a group of people who used to be drug addicts. They gather together to help people who are in the middle of drug rehabilitation. I've heard that a lot of people who has joined this group could successfully stop using drugs...just in case you're interested."

Tum blinked at the card Kong handed to him before taking it. "Is this for my sister?"

"Yeah." Kong nodded to the card. "I once attended the lecture organized by these group of people. It's quite interesting, so I want to give it to you."

Tum looked up at Kong with a look of surprise. A strange feeling arose in his heart again—like the time when Kong extended his hand to wipe his mouth. However, this time, his heart beat much stronger than that incident. Tum pressed his lips together, trying to collect himself and speak softly, "Thank you."

Kong put his hands into his pockets, taking a glimpse at Tum's reaction before letting out his breath. "Tum, honestly, don't you really not know why I've done all these things?"

The petite man gaped before hastily lowering his gaze. He put the card into his pocket. "You mean, why did you order me to collect the information in exchange for help, so my sister wouldn't go to jail? I understand."

"It wasn't just about finding information." Kong drew his face closer to the other man, almost making him taken aback. "I mean everything I've done for you. Has it ever occurred to you that I might like you?"

Tum was stunned as if he was cursed into stone. His attractive lips opened slightly as if it wanted to speak something but nothing came out. The air around them was suddenly still and quiet. The way Kong was looking at him wasn't the same anymore. It wasn't the way Kong used to deliberately annoy him, but this time it was intensely longing and pleading. He'd always told himself that he hated this man to the core of his bones. But why did Kong's confession was so loud and made his knees felt like they were sinking into the ground like this?

"But I'm a guy, Lieutenant Kong." Tum pointed out with his shaking voice.

"But you like men, don't you?"

"I like men, but you don't, Lieutenant..."

"Who told you that? I'm just a guy who is good at deceiving people, including myself." Kong caught Tum's shoulders. "Stop talking to that guy. Choose me."

Tum should be shocked that Kong knew about him and Dr. Poramet, but then he remembered how great a detective Lieutenant Kong was. He no longer doubted how Kong knew about this. "So, is this your joke as always, huh?"

"All my life, if I can choose to speak the truth for once, this would be it." Kong cradled Tum's face in his hands. "I like you."



The warm breeze blew past the two men sitting at the edge of the pond in the public park. Tum gazed at the light reflecting upon the surface of black water. His heart was still hammering, and the matter worsened when the muscular arm was hugging around his shoulder. Tum turned to look at Kong, who was also looking at him with a smile. However, it was a smile full of warmth and delight, the one Kong rarely showed.

"What did that Doctor say?"

"He said he wasn't offended. He understood and he wished me happiness." Tum hugged his knees to his chest. "This is quite shocking, you know. Yesterday, I still hated you, Lieutenant."

"That wasn't hatred." Kong removed his hand on Tum's shoulder and patted his head. He feigned looking in the distance. "There was always love hidden inside."

Tum made a face like he just ate the greasiest stuff in his life. "You're such a cheese ball."

"Cheesy, but delicious."

"Like rotten cheese?"

"Aww, listen to yourself."

"Why, it's true. Rotten cheese should be melted and thrown away."

Kong raised his eyebrows and smiled playfully. "Wanna try?"

Tum was taken aback when the other man ambushed him with a kiss on his cheek. He quickly pushed Kong's face away with all his strength, not allowing the second ambush. Kong pretended to collapse on his back, and rolled around on the grass. He laughed wholeheartedly. Tum grabbed a bunch of grass near his hands and

tossed it repeatedly to this annoying person. He let out a smile unconsciously.

Why the man Tum hated the most ended up to be the man who confessed his feeling to him? Why did he choose Kong over the new man who was far better, both in appearance and characters? Only Heavens would know the answers to these questions. Tum must have been Kong's nemesis in the past life. Both must repay for the sins they had committed by becoming acquaintances, enemies, saviors, and lovers in the end.



There was one thing refused to leave his mind. Tum had heard that Dr. Gunn was injured that he had to go through surgery. He had been hospitalized for several days and it made Tum feel even more guilty. He glanced up at the man sleeping next to him, then reached out to wake him up.

"Lieutenant Kong, it's morning."

"Hm?...Five more minutes." Kong turned his way, reached over Tum's body and hugged him tightly.

"No more!" Tum wriggled until he was free from the other man's embrace. He sat up, looking at Kong who was lying on his back and reluctantly opened his eyes. "I want your advice."

"What?" Kong rubbed his eyes sleepily.

"We should apologize to Dr. Gunn that we suspected him of being the murderer. I'll also confess that I've gone through his office."

"It's over." Kong leaned himself against the headboard. The blanket covering his body slid down, revealing his muscular torso. "You searched his office to look for evidence. After that, he searched your room to lure me away, so that he could enter Dr. Somsak's house to find evidence and send it to the police. I had Inspector Wasan to ask Dr. Gunn about all of this. Everything is obvious."

"I know it's obvious, but it's a misunderstanding anyway." Tum stood up, picking up a T-shirt and putting on his boxer shorts. "Dr. Gunn and I have to continue working together for a long time. So, I'll buy a gift and go apologize to him."

"Don't you have work to do?"

"I've an afternoon shift today." Tum swept the towel over his shoulder. "You're free during that time, aren't you? Are you coming with me?"

Kong was reluctant but he got up from the bed and stretched lazily. "I'll drive you. Where do you want to buy him the gift?"

Tum curved up his lips lightly. He knew that Kong was trying to please him, but he didn't know how long Kong would keep doing this. Nevertheless, Kong's small effort made him even more adorable than usual.



Tum and Kong walked into specialized surgery medical ward with a bouquet of fresh flowers in a vase and a bag containing sweets, milk, and fruits. After asking the nurse where Dr. Gunn was, both of them headed to the special room at the end of the hall. It was the biggest room with windows on both sides, brightening the room up.

Gunn gazed at the visitors with a shocking face. In the room, an old lady in a nice dress was preparing Gunn a meal. She looked up and smiled at them both.

"You have guests, Dear." She told Gunn.

He nodded and turned his head to Tum and Kong. A surprising expression was still lingering on his face. It was typical for him to act this way, since both of them were the least expected guests.

"Professor Gunn..." Tum stammered. "Lieutenant Kong and I...we come here to visit you. How are you?"

"I'm much better now." Gunn smiled slightly. "I don't think the two of you would come."

"After all that has happened, I deeply apologize for the trouble I've caused." Tum glanced at Lieutenant Kong to signal him to say something.

"You looked a lot thinner." Kong lifted the bags he brought and placed them on the table near a television.

Gunn watched Tum and Kong quietly for a while.

"Can I have a moment alone with my friends, mom? I'm sorry. It won't take long." Gunn told his mother. She nodded with understanding.

"It's alright. I'm going down to buy some tissue papers anyway. Make yourself at home, Dear." She got to her feet, picked up her bag and left the room.

Tum took Kong's arm and pulled him to sit on a chair beside Gunn's bed.

"Professor, the thing is, I come here to apologize today because I feel bad for what I did. It's the reason why you had to look around for the evidence of who had searched through your office. And then the matter had gone worse." Tum inhaled deeply. "I once actually searched on your desk. I created the opportunity to ask for the key from Ms. Nong by pretending to use the restroom and deliberately forgetting my phone, so I can search for evidence for the police."

Gunn's gaze immediately shifted to Lieutenant Kong. "I'm not surprised."

"I want to get it off my chest. At the time, I was under a lot of pressure. Even Lieutenant Kong was forced to find the evidence. Please, don't hold it against us."

"Even if you didn't come into my office, I would've tried to find the intruder anyway because Somsak took my thing and moved around my patients' files." Gunn touched Tum's arm. This action made Kong fidget. "I'm also sorry that I went to rummage your room and threatened you that day. I don't know you didn't have anything to do with this back then."

Tum smiled in relief. This was why he came to visit Gunn today. The tension between all of them eased. Only the sense of amity remained. Even Kong felt more relaxed. If he could reconcile with Wasan, then, being friend with Gunn—Wasan's boyfriend—was inevitable, despite how much unwilling he wanted to. Even Dr. Gunn himself seemed so neither.

But...how can he say? Your enemy might one day become your true reliable friend.

Chapter Twenty Nine

The Tiger That Survived

Wasan opened the bedroom door and walked towards the window. He opened it to let the wind and sunlight in. Gunn followed him with a smiling face. He raised his hand to adjust a sling strap on his not fully functioned right arm while watching Wasan arrange everything for him.

When Wasan called himself as Gunn's boyfriend, he immediately stepped on his additional role in this house. Wasan became Gunn's personal caregiver, who willingly and wholeheartedly took care of him during his recovery. That was probably because he wanted to repay Gunn for saving his life.

Wasan removed the blanket and beckoned Gunn towards him. "Take some rest. Don't go anywhere. You'd just come back from the hospital. I'll prepare the food for you."

"Thank you." Gunn walked towards his bed and slowly lowered himself on it. He laid his head on the pillow Wasan had arranged for him. "No duty today?"

"I switched my shift with another officer to pick you up from the hospital today." Wasan pulled the blanket to cover Gunn's legs. "What do you want to eat?"

"Let me think for a sec." Gunn closed his eyes while Wasan stood crossing his arms. "I'm super tired of hospital's foods. I want to have exotic food like Japanese or Korean food."

"Okay, I'll buy it from the mall. If you want something else, LINE message me." Wasan was about to walk out, but Gunn suddenly grabbed his hand. He turned back his head. "What?"

"We haven't been all alone like this for so long." Gunn circled his thumb on the back of Wasan's hand. "Actually, now I'm not hungry for food. I'm hungry for something else."

"What are you hungry for?"

Gunn patted on his lap. Wasan watched him silently, seeming like he was thinking over it before he decided to sit on the edge of the bed. He leaned in closer and firmly pressed his lips to the man on the bed. Gunn responded without any hesitation. He exchanged the kiss with the man he had been yearning for all those times he was lying helplessly on the bed. Gunn's left hand move to grope Wasan's attractive buttocks. Their bodies were immediately set on fire as if the flame was burning within. Wasan kissed down Gunn's neck and went further to his chest and his abs. He unhooked Gunn's pants and pulled the zip down.

The lunch time, which was long forgotten, had now passed. However, they felt no starvation, but the ultimate blissful feeling. The scene before Gunn made him wonder whether he was dreaming. Wasan's every movement was so beautiful. Gunn wanted to make him happy, but in this state, Wasan chose to be the one who did everything, and now he was the one who was straddling. Gunn reached his only functional hand to caress Wasan's firm abdomen.

While panting slightly, Wasan asked about Gunn's arm. "Are you hurt?"

Gunn shook his head. "I should be asking you that."

Wasan leaned down to kiss Gunn "Don't worry about me. I'm getting used to it now."



"Bunn."

Dr. Bunnakit turned around to the voice coming from the door. He put the last stuff from his desk into the box and stood up straight. He smiled at his senior physician who was walking towards him. "Have you come back to work, Gunn?"

"Yes, I'm almost fully recovered. Now, it's only my right arm that doesn't seem to work so well. I've to leave my arm like this and

attend physiotherapy from time to time." Gunn smiled and shook his head. "After taking a bullet and having survived, I realized that I've lived a good life."

"You're lucky you didn't end up on my table." Bunn glanced at the things in Gunn's hands. "You're returning my books?"

"Yes." Gunn came to the table and put down Bunn's textbooks he had borrowed three months ago. "Are you really going, Bunn?"

"Yeah. Today is my last day here." Bunn looked at his books. "What do you think of these books?"

"I hadn't finished reading them. I just flipped through some interesting topics and something that would be used frequently." Gunn tapped Bunn's shoulder and smiled at him. "Thank you for the books. If we meet in Bangkok, I'll buy you a coffee."

"It's my pleasure. You must visit me in Bangkok, Gunn." Bunn put the textbooks in the box.

"If I go there, I'll definitely call you. Good luck as a professor in the medical school. I'm sure the students will love you, Bunn."

"Thank you, Gunn. Take care."

Gunn raised his hand in farewell gesture before turning on his heels and walked out of the Forensic Department's office.

Bunn's gaze followed the tall man until he vanished from his sight. Even though the murderer was concluded to be Dr. Somsak, for Bunn, a strange feeling coming off Gunn hadn't diminished in the slightest. He gradually breathed in and out to calm his mind. He promised to himself that he wouldn't jump to any conclusion and leave here without any obligation. He wouldn't find out why he felt that way. He would leave it all behind.

Right now, the hospital had returned to its peaceful state.



Tonight was another quiet night. In the Critical Surgical Male Department, a patient in a partitioned room was still sound asleep as always. His vital signs were normal. Despite a small amount of phlegm, he could still breathe regularly on his own through the oxygen mask covered over the hole on his neck.

Mayuree recorded the patient's vital signs onto the chart for the last time of this night. She prepared to call and give report to the ordinary ward nurses that the patient could be transferred because he was no longer in a critical state that required a close observation, except the cerebral hypoxia, in which his brain was deprived of oxygen. The hypoxia would make him sleep like a sleeping beauty. However, it wasn't that serious since his brain function had a tendency to improve. Also, his other internal organs had regained their normal function. They were only waiting to see how much his brain would recover. So, the doctor allowed the staff to transfer him to the ordinary ward.

"Do you want me to call the porter?" Aui, a young nurse who was on duty with Mayuree, asked her from the door frame of the partitioned room.

"Call him and inform the police that we'll transfer Dr. Somsak to the male surgical ward." Mayuree quickly wrote it down in the record. After finishing, she stood up and called an intern on the shift to report other patients' blood results.

Half an hour later, the patient transporter came in with a stretcher trolley. He was a man with short curly hairs, wearing a thick pair of glasses and a hygienic mask. He and the nurse helped each other moved Dr. Somsak onto the stretcher trolley and, together, they wheeled him out of the critical operating room.

"I never saw him before." Mayuree turned to talk with Aui.

"We recruited many new employees lately." Aui replied, smiling. "By the way, that guy looks so strong. He should be fine lifting the patients with that tall, muscular body of his."

"Why are you so excited whenever you see a good-looking guy, huh?" Mayuree teased her. They let out a laugh, feeling relaxing.



The porter and Ying, the nurse, pushed the patient through the silent walkway between buildings. There was only an extern hurriedly walked pass them. Ying was about to walk to the

elevator that led to the Male Surgery Department and press the button, but the porter stopped her.

"Excuse me, Miss, I just came by that elevator, and it seemed broken. It's jerky like it's going to stuck." He spoke casually in a northern dialect.

Ying turned back to him with a surprised look. "Really?"

"We should use the elevator in the Medicine Department building and take the patient through the walkway back here." The porter pointed to the nearby building.

She glanced at the malfunctioning elevator with suspicion.

"Fine." Ying turned back. They pushed the trolley through another walkway, heading to the Medicine Department building's elevator which wasn't far away. When they entered the elevator, Ying pressed the button for the fifth floor. She took a glimpse at the patient, whose condition looked stable, and waited for the elevator to reach the destination quietly.

Thud!

Suddenly, something fell on the floor. That sound pulled Ying's gaze to look at it.

The porter looked startled. He tried to move the thing he had just dropped with his foot; however, he ended up kicking it even further out of his reach. "Miss! I dropped my phone! I'm sorry but could you please pick it up for me?"

Ying sighed and shook her head slightly with the trouble this guy caused her, still, she helped him retrieving his phone anyway. However, his phone slid under the stretcher trolley. "Crap, it goes that way. Hold on."

While she struggled to pick up the phone, the porter brought out a syringe filled with colorless liquid. He removed a cog of the needleless access port connected to IV line and the patient's veins, then connected the syringe into the port and pushed in the liquid before closing its cog. At the same time, Ying successfully picked his phone up.

"Next time, don't play with your phone while working. If the patient's family members see you, they'll complain about it." Ying handed his phone back to him. He repeatedly raised his hands to

thank her and took his phone. The elevator had reached its destination. They eventually brought the patient to the Male Surgery Ward safely.

The new porter left the building after his mission was completed. He walked to the isolated and dark corner, removed his glasses and stuck it in his shirt pocket. While squeezing his right shoulder, he grumbled, "That's hurt."

The man walked to pick up a garbage bag containing dry leaves he had prepared. Then, he headed to the abandoned area where Yongyuth was murdered. He kept walking until he was sure that no one could see him. The bag was opened and everything inside was dumped on the ground. He lighted a match and threw it on the pile of garbage, and waited until the fire began to burn. He pulled out the syringe from his pocket and threw it into the fire. Next, he extracted his mask as well as the curly wig that he put on his head, and threw them all into the fire.

The orange flame reflected on the man's handsome face. His calm black pupils were staring at the fire with a cold gaze.

Someone once said that secret never die. But, at least, the death of this man would leave his secret belonged solely to him.

The phone in his pocket vibrated, and he instantly picked it up.

"Where are you?" The caller asked.

"At the hospital," He said in a casual tone. "Are you home already? I returned here to take my work home, but I'm about to go back. Shouldn't be more than fifteen minutes. "

"Hurry back. I've bought dinner for you."

"You're so sweet, Babe...I'll hurry back now."

Gunn hung up the phone and dropped his left arm to his side. He turned on his heels back to the direction of the hospital. Dr. Somsak's heart should have stopped beating by now, due to the high amount of potassium chloride he had injected into the IV line. The nurses and doctors on duty must be trying to do the CPR for him tumultuously. Eventually, they would determine the cause of his sudden death as phlegm blocking the airway.

Now, the brilliant pathologist no longer worked here. If no one suspicious about Dr. Somsak's death, there would be no investigation

into this. Besides, the elevator Gunn used was the one where he had kissed Wasan, and he was fully aware that there was no CCTV installation.

"You shouldn't have known my secret," Gunn murmured softly into the flame with a stoic face that looked like a sculpture. "You shouldn't have, Somsak...you shouldn't."

Two tigers can't live in the same cave. One tiger must die.
Gunn was the tiger that had won the battle and survived.

Chapter Thirty

Inspiration

Dr. Somsak entered the temple with Dr. Kwanhatai, his wife. She turned to look at her husband, who seemed uncharacteristically absentminded while he was heading to the area where his mother's ashes were kept. The atmosphere around Somsak was so oppressive that Kwanhatai could barely breathe. She knew about his mother from him. From her perspective, what Somsak had encountered in his youth was something that everyone must face with it at some point.

They arrived before a cremation niche with portraits of the dead. This was the first time Kwanhatai had had a chance to see her mother-in-law in her youth. She was a woman with straight, beautiful long hair. Unfortunately, the illness took her life away when she was only 40 years old.

Somsak kneeled in front of the urn containing his mother's ashes, and placed the diploma he took along down on the ground. It stated that he graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine, with a first-class honor,

"I've graduated, mom."

Kwanhathai should be moved with the scene before her eyes. However, she felt scared instead. The way Somsak looked at his mother's picture didn't reflect love or mourning, but it clearly reflected the rage. She slowly retreated from that area. A sensation inside her lower abdomen helped calm her mind to some extent. Kwanhatai stroked her stomach that was carrying Somsak's and her baby, who was going to come into this world in the next three months.

"When the time comes, I'll definitely apply your advice in the treatment for my patients."

The silence fell for a minute before Somsak stood up. He retrieved his diploma and spoke to his wife with an aloofness in his voice. "Let's go, Kwan."



Throughout his life as an internist and until he became the hospital executive, Somsak had never had the chance to do as he wished. He was a well-known and well-respected physician, and everyone expected him to cure the illness. Moreover, the higher his position was, the less he had participated in a one-on-one examination with the patients, let alone the terminal ill patients.

And wherever he went, there were always eyes on him.

"Professor Somsak, hello."

"Director, hi. "

Somsak accepted the greetings from the hospital staff with a smiling face, but his heart felt cramped. With his reputation and power, he couldn't ruin them. He had been waiting for the right moment, but he didn't know when it would come.

Until a family physician who wished to work in the field of palliative care stepped in.



Somsak's phone rang while he was collecting the documents, preparing to go home. He walked back to his desk and picked the phone up to see who was calling him.

Rord Puangkaew

"What's up, buddy?" Somsak greeted his childhood friend, Rord.

Rord used to be an owner of the famous restaurant before changing his career to a politician, and in the end, he was diagnosed

with final stage pancreatic cancer. Rord once called Somsak to discuss about the treatment. Somsak had suggested that he should try going to the university hospital, but for what Somsak knew, there was no longer effective treatment, except for the palliative care.

"Somsak." Rord's voice sounded raspy and weary. "Can I ask you for one thing?"

"Sure. What is it?"

"Can you issue a medical certificate for me...saying that I've a terminal stage cancer? It's for my relative..." Rord paused to catch his breath for a moment. "So that after my journey tonight...there will be no autopsy."

Somsak frowned. "What do you mean? Your journey tonight? "

"I've chosen...Somsak." He spoke with a more cheerful tone. "It feels so good when we can...determine our own death..."

Somsak was stunned for a moment. He tried to collect himself and continued to listen to Rord.

"I'm very happy...that someone could help me. I'm glad that, at least, I can schedule my journey and end this everlasting agony."

"Who will help you?"

"I was born at 3 a.m. and 3 a.m. will be the time when I die..."

There was no way one could know when they would die unless they were delirious.

Or the death had been prepared.

Somsak's heart beat faster. He rushed to the computer to check Rord's medical records. He learned that lately, there was only one doctor who took care of Rord.

Dr. Guntapat Akaramaytee

And his assumption was correct.

That night, a silhouette jumped out of the window from Rord's house at 3.10 a.m. It was a confirmation that Rord hadn't been delirious. His death had really been arranged. Somsak, who was familiar with this neighborhood, walked out of the bush he was hiding after the silhouette disappeared into darkness.

Somsak didn't see his face, but he was quite positive who that man was.



“Gunn.”

The owner of that name turned back to look at Somsak after they had been using the same walkway between the hospital building for a while.

The handsome man greeted Somsak respectfully. "Hello, Professor."

"I want your opinion on something. Do you have time? "

Gunn smiled. "I'm free at the moment, Professor."

Somsak led Gunn to the Critical Ward filled with critically ill patients who were breathing through endotracheal tubes and had IV lines all over them. Gunn glanced at him with doubtful eyes while Somsak walked towards one patient who was lying in a partition separating patients with antimicrobial resistance. Lying unconsciously on the bed was a thin, old lady. Her chest moved up and down rhythmically in accordance with an endotracheal tube.

"This is the third time she ends up in this ward." Said Somsak. "Her name is Pin Lahma, 70-year-old, diagnosed with pneumonia with respiratory failure^[40]. She's been bedridden for some time. She went back home and then was sent here again because her family refused to take care of her. Her children were ruffians. They've all left her. So, sending her home is quite hopeless..." He turned to look at Gunn. "What do you think we should do?"

Gunn opened the patient's chart to see her medical record. "If she gets through this infection, she'll need a long-term care. In this case, the problem might be the arrangement of home care resources. If we could provide her a suitable care, we'll reduce the chance of recurrent lung infection. So, I think that I might schedule a family meeting to ask for the possibility of hiring a caregiver, cooperate with the authority in the community to inquire about the resources, and then cooperate with RPHPH to visit the patient accordingly."

Somsak wasn't satisfied with the answer. Gunn was unforgivably missing the point Somsak wanted to make. "There's no way her family could effort the caregiver. Also, she lives on a hill tribe village,

many hours away from the hospital. It's challenging to deliver public health service."

"I think there should be a way." Gunn looked at the patient with merciful gaze. "Her fever and blood result seemed to be improved constantly. The transport ventilator setting is also not very high. There might be some hope left for her."

There is no hope for her!

That was what Somsak wanted to shout at Gunn. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "A word like hope and such a case don't go along well."

Many things clearly indicated that two of them were not on the same page. There were many patients in the hospital whom Somsak deemed appropriate to be liberated, but not a single case Gunn did the way he did to Rord.

Persuading Gunn to join him wouldn't work. Gunn wasn't tractable. He was a wise physician, upholding to his own ideology. After observing Gunn for months, Somsak decided that he shouldn't risk revealing his dark side to this man. Instead, what he saw that night became his inspiration to take this matter into his hands.

Even though Somsak couldn't have Gunn at his side, he could use him as a scapegoat, in case he made any mistakes.

When Mrs. Pin Lahma was transferred to the ordinary ward, she was assigned a separate room due to antimicrobial resistance. Somsak watched her respiration gradually slow down until it stopped. Her long-lasting suffering ended at last. Since he became a doctor, Somsak had never felt this fulfillment and content. He enjoyed this overwhelming feeling.

He did what he had promised to his mother.

He was a liberator.

A benefactor who was going to share his good karma to liberate the souls agonized inside painful bodies.

Somsak kept the empty syringe into his pocket. He waited for the right moment to go out without being seen, and then left the room quietly.



What Somsak feared came sooner than he had expected.

The patient who was killed by Boze had finally been brought to the autopsy because of his carelessness. He let the neighbor in the area see him, and left so many traces of tampering. Somsak was positive that Dr. Bunnakit would have noticed the abnormalities. And that would be the beginning of all suspense.

At this time, Gunn would become useful as he would be the one to blame for all these mistakes.

"Doctor," Somsak called Gunn who was heading towards the outpatient examination room.

"Yes, Professor?"

"I've got a meeting. I heard that there's an autopsy on a cancer patient who had passed away at home. Can you ask about the results from Dr. Bunnakit for me?"

Gunn was silent for a moment before smiling slightly. "Of course."

After a while, everything had escalated. Boze went mad and attacked the police officer without thinking carefully. If Boze was arrested, it wouldn't be good for Somsak. So, he waited for Boze in his residence and murdered him, staging the scene as if it were a suicide. Somsak also typed the suicide note to throw the suspicion to Gunn.

Later, while Yongyuth, the security guard, was giving the direction for Somsak's car, he received an unexpected question when he opened the door and stepped down from the car. "Director?"

"What is it?" With a smile, Somsak turned to look at the guard who had called his name.

"I'd like to ask you something. About the CCTV cameras. Do you know whether we've additionally installed one of them near Dr. Gunn's new office yet? "

Somsak's smile slowly disappeared from his face. "What's wrong?"

"Dr. Gunn asked me to rewind the CCTV record in front of his office." Yongyuth's face showed his discomfort. "I still don't have time

to thoroughly check it out, but the current camera couldn't see people go in and out of Dr. Gunn's office."

"I don't know much about the CCTV camera. Why don't you ask your supervisor about it?"

Why did everything had now spread like a wildfire?

Somsak wiped off the blood on his face. His expensive shirt was covered in red spots. A large stone in his hands was bathed in blood, and the blood was pouring to the ground. He looked at the lifeless body before looking up at the evening sun that was still blazing. Rusty smell of fresh blood diffused in the air, mixing with the warm scent of soil beneath.

He didn't want to liberate someone like this. Not at all.

But he...didn't have a choice.

Epilogue

A Happy Departure

Five months ago.

The old lady's groaning was the first sound that Guntapat heard when he opened the door of a special hospital room. He saw a skinny old lady continually tossing and turning with pain. There was a middle-aged man, who should be her son, kept messaging her because he had no clue how to deal with the patient's condition.

"Hello, Doctor." The guy raised his hands to greet him before turning to the patient. "Mom, mom, the doctor's here. Relax, mom. Doctor's here to help."

"Hello." The Doctor raised his hands to greet the two of them before sitting on the chair near the patient's bed that Ornanong, his nurse, had arranged. "My name is Guntapat. She's Ornanong, a nurse on my team. Our team is a palliative care unit. Mrs. Raweewan's primary doctor has consulted me to jointly take care of her."

The guy's face was somewhat confused. "Are you going to take care of my mother too?"

"Yes, I specialize in the treatment of pain and other issues." Guntapat reached to touch the old lady's hand. "Mrs. Raweewan, you must be hurting now, right?"

She nodded and frowned with tears brimming on the corners of her eyes. "Yes...all the pain relievers are not helping."

"Let's do this. Before we get to know more about each other, I'll eliminate your pain first, sounds good?" Guntapat gripped the lady's

hand firmly as an encouragement. “I think there is still a way to adjust the medicine. Please be patient, Mrs. Raweewan.”

Since he had taken care of the terminal stage patients, Raweewan’s case was the most challenging to tackle. Her suffering was an extreme level of pain because the illness had eaten up her nerves. After he saw that Mrs. Raweewan’s pain was controllable for a while, she was allowed to go home. However, her condition worsened rapidly that Guntapat had to schedule an urgent home visit.

“This case really makes my head spin, Nong.” Guntapat murmured after getting back on the van. “I think I’ll send the consultation to the pain management clinic of the university hospital.”

“Dr. Gunn, I guess, there must be something about Mrs. Raweewan’s pain more than we think,” Nong mentioned. “From my experiences, I think we haven’t truly understood her. Maybe, if we understand what she really wants, her condition might improve without taking any medicine.”

Guntapat paused for a moment before saying, “I’ll have to spend more time with her. If there’s no urgent case, please schedule this case in my visiting date as soon as possible.”



“You came to visit me again, Doctor.” Raweewan’s voice sounded so pleasant that it immediately lightened up the world.

Guntapat raised his hands to greet her. The old lady opened her arms waiting to hold Guntapat, who returned her embrace without delay.

“How are you today?”

“I’m not in pain today, Doctor.” Raweewan looked at Gunn’s face. “This is the fifth time you visit me. You aren’t only handsome but also kind.”

“Only hearing that you aren’t in pain already make my day.” Guntapat sat on a chair next to the headboard.

“Thongkum! Go fetch cold water for Doctor.” Raweewan called her son, who was busy in the kitchen with his wife, before turning to give

a sweet smile to Guntapat. “The drugs you prescribed are really helpful.”

Guntapat joyfully smiled. He looked up and saw many pictures standing on the cabinet. “There’re several pictures of your children.”

The old lady turned to look at those pictures. “Yes, I’ve three sons, but I divorced when Wasan was still little.” Raweewan pointed to a photo of a guy in uniform. “Wasan’s the youngest. He’s a police officer, now a captain. He’s handsome and cool, isn’t he?”

“He looks really cool. You must be very proud to have a police officer as a son. By the way, has he married and had some grandchildren for you?”

Raweewan glanced at Guntapat and smiled lightly. “He might not marry and give me grandkids. Captain doesn’t like girls.”

On the surface, Guntapat didn’t show any surprise to remain his professionalism, even though he was exclaiming loudly inward. “Oh, I see, but that doesn’t make you any less proud of him, right? Because he seems like a good person, and the voice of people.”

“Right. What I want for him is to meet a good person. I know that he likes men and only want him to have a good partner.” Raweewan moved her hands to hold Guntapat’s and held it firmly. “If my boy has a partner like you, then I can rest in peace. I’ll have nothing to worry about.”

Guntapat didn’t know how to respond to her words. He could only smile and comfort her, “If I’ve a chance to meet him, I’ll say hi to him.”

“If something happens to me, I’d like you to take care of Wasan.” She spoke with a face full of hope.

The vigor of Raweewan was very short-lived. After two months, her illness had spread to her spine. She was admitted to the hospital again due to her inability to walk and to hold urine and bowel movements. She became completely bedridden.

Thongkum looked extremely exhausted when Guntapat came to visit his patient this time.

“Radiation treatment was complete. She has always taken medicines, but her pain is still uncontrollable now. I can’t rest at all, Doctor.”

Guntapat approached the old lady who had gone very gaunt. Her legs became cachectic while her stomach swelled up because of ascites. Seeing the scene in front of him, he felt pity for her. He gently touched Raweewan's arms and called her with a soft tone, "Aunty..."

"Doctor...Oh, Doctor..." Raweewan's tears trickled down when she saw Guntapat's face. "Can we...talk in private?"

Thongkum nodded in understanding before leaving the room.

Guntapat turned back to his patient. "Is there anything you want to tell me?"

"Doctor...I don't want anything else." Her eyes were pleading. "My every moment is pain. Doctor...please...help me."

He knitted his brows. "How can I help you?"

"Kill me. Release me from this pain, please..." Raweewan closed her eyes. "Do anything...to let me die peacefully at home. On my own bedroom, where the pictures of my children surrounded me. Let Games, my middle son, take me with him..."

"Miss," Guntapat lowered his voice. "I can't do what you ask me to. It's illegal. But I'll take care of the pain..."

"My body...my life...I've chosen, Doctor. Please accelerate my death...make it quicker. Don't let me...suffer like this longer." She clenched his lab coat's sleeve. "I beg you. It's my last wish. I promise my children won't hold it against you..."

Guntapat stayed calm. He let himself submerge into his thought.

First, the patients must be in the last stage of their illness, and were given a six-month prognosis.

Second, they immensely suffered from the illness that even after receiving medication couldn't help ease their pain.

Third, they expressed their will to die without leaving any obligations behind and had lived their lives to the fullest.

Fourth, they had no record of depression or other mental disorders.

Fifth, the patients must be fully conscious.

Sixth, he must visit the patients no less than three times, knowing about the house's layout and the members of the family.

Missing only one of these rules, he would refuse to do this. However, in Mrs. Raweewan's case, after he had considered this, he

thought that he should take her under his...*special* care.

"I've acknowledged your wish," Guntapat spoke after he was silent for a good while. "Please keep this a secret between us and I'll do as much as I could to make your final wish come true."

Rawewan's smile that she gave to Guntapat after he had finished speaking was as bright as the time she hadn't been suffered from pain.

Her greatest wish was going to be answered.

Nothing could be more delightful for her.

"Thank you...after I'm gone...please take care of...my little one, as you have promised."

Guntapat seemed hesitated, but for his patient's happiness, he must follow his words. "Sure. I'll take care of your son."

Rawewan wanted to pass away without pain and she wanted her deceased middle son to guide her to the afterlife.



Guntapat opened the storage door he'd rented at S-Storage. When the light turned on, the only thing sitting in the middle of that room was a grey plastic container. He walked to the container and kneeled down before opening the lid. Inside was a box containing syringes, needles, and two glass bulbs containing drugs. He didn't store too much drugs because he knew that he wouldn't have many chances to use them. This box had been opened only twice since he had been working here.

It wasn't easy to find the patients who applied to all of his checklists.

And this was going to be his third time doing this.

Ornanong called him while he was keeping the bulb in his satchel. "Yes, Nong?"

"I've got more drugs." His nurse's voice seemed cheerful.

"Thank you." Guntapat closed the lid of the container. "I've troubled you again."

"It's alright. If I don't help you, you wouldn't be able to take care of the patients. By the way...is it tonight?"

“Yes.” He replied calmly. “The patient wants to see me...tonight.”



“Mom, you’re the strongest woman I’ve ever met. You’ve been through a lot of hardship in life.” A deep, soothing, soft tone lulled her to relaxation for she knew this voice very well. “Now. It’s time. Don’t be afraid. Keep your mind calm, and all this pain will go away. You’ll be far away. In a peaceful place with your son.”

This was all she wanted. The old lady’s eyes began to brim with tears of joy. “Thank you...Thank you...”

Just when the voice said, her pain began to fade away slowly. The old lady felt relaxed in a way she had never felt before. Her breath gradually slowed until her chest stopped moving. The pale, bleary eyes shut tight and would never open again.

Rawewan. Time of death: 02.35 a.m.

Guntapat jumped out of the window from Rawewan’s house. He dressed in all black and wore a black cap. Grabbing the black mask that had fallen off his face, he was about to run to the back of the house to escape when he heard something moving around in the bushes. He saw a thin, dirty man whose hair was long and messy. The man was looking at him with a look of shock on his face.

The man in black was stunned too. This man might have seen everything he had done through the window. He looked at the crazy man for a long time before deciding that he wouldn’t do anything to him.

No one would believe this man anyway.

And he didn’t want to take more lives without a necessary cause.

Guntapat put his finger to his lips in a gesture of silence. He moved his mask up to cover his face before walking into the darkness and disappearing, leaving the man alone on the ground. His whole body was shaking. He gradually moved to take a peek through Rawewan’s window. He saw the old lady lying peacefully with her hands intertwined over her stomach. She was lying so still that there was no sign of breath. No more sign of life.

“Grim Reaper...” The man uttered the words with a trembling voice. His willow-liked legs grew suddenly weak that he almost couldn’t stand. His gaze wandered to the darkness of the night where Guntapat had disappeared. “Grim Reaper...Grim Reaper...Grim Reaper...”



Wasan’s warm breath was slow and constant, indicating that he had drifted off to a deep sleep due to his tiredness from taking double shifts. His head was on Gunn’s chest. His usual stressful visage looked peaceful at this moment. Gunn stared at the other man’s eyelashes. No beauty in this whole world could compare to the man lying on his chest at this moment.

While Guntapat raised his hand to stroke Wasan’s cropped-short hair, his thought returned to the time Raweewan asked him to take care of Wasan. He must admit that he hadn’t planned to do what she asked for he had never known nor seen her youngest son before. He gave her his words just to make her feel at peace before her departure.

It was unbelievable that only the first time he looked into Wasan’s eyes at the funeral, this man easily came into his heart. Not long after that, Wasan asked to stay over his house, and it made him shock. Guntapat had to buy time to relocate every suspicious things in his house to the rental storage by taking Wasan to the hotel. Then, he hired the painters to paint his fence as a cover-up.

Even though his secret remained a secret, he wanted Wasan to know that his love for him was genuine.

He would never let Wasan slip from his hands.

He would never hurt Wasan.

He would take care of Wasan as he had promised to Raweewan so that her soul in heaven would be happy when she watched over them from above.

Guntapat bent down to kiss Wasan’s head. The man opened his eyes. “Did I fall asleep?”

“Yeah.” He moved his hand to touch Wasan’s cheek. “You arrived home, didn’t change any clothes. You hugged me and slept on top of me in your uniform.”

“I didn’t have a good sleep for so many days.” Wasan massaged his eyebrows.

“You’ve new cases?”

“Yes. There’s a new messy case coming. We’re so busy right now.” Wasan went silent for a while. “I had a dream a moment ago.”

“About what?”

“I saw my mom in my dream.” Wasan looked up at Guntapat. “I saw her in a white dress like a nun^[41]. She looked healthy and happy. Her skin was radiant and flawless. She said she was very happy right now and she wanted me to thank you.” Wasan pushed himself up on the bed. “Since my mom passed away, I’ve never dreamt of her.”

Guntapat smiled lightly. “When you’re free in the morning, shall we go to the temple and give alms to the monks for your mom?^[42]”

“Sounds good.” Wasan pulled down his upper uniform’s zip. “I’ll take a shower.”

“Not yet, Babe.” He wrapped his good arm around Wasan’s waist. “We’ll soak in our sweat again, anyway. Let’s take a shower later.”

“Hey! Do you want another broken arm? I’ll break yours in half.”

“Easy, officer!”

Laughs and shouts from their teasing made this night the happiest and most colorful one. Guntapat thought that he should thank the destiny that brought them together and made the weary days become meaningful. Not a single day that he didn’t want to come home to meet the man he loved, and he believed that Wasan felt the same way.



“Som, you look a lot better today.” Dr. Pang mentioned while she was looking at the medicine list she had given to her patient.

“Yes, Doctor.”

“I think I’ll reduce the amount of the pill you took in the morning into half a pill.” Som, who seemed to gain more weight and got his

hair shortened, looked more like a normal person. He gazed down at the floor. His psychiatrist noticed his abnormal reaction. "Do you have something on your mind that you want to tell me?"

"Nothing."

"I see you've begun working?"

"Yes...I'm a laborer. Collecting longans, cleaning, mowing...all of it."

"I think it's a very good thing." Pang wrote down the information from the answer she got into her note.

"Doctor..."

"Yes?"

"Why no one believes me?"

She paused her pen and looked up at him. "About what?"

"The Grim Reaper. Whether people considered it's real or just my hallucination, I really did see him."

Dr. Pang leaned into her chair. "I believe that you really saw him, but what you saw might be the result of the chemical imbalance in the brain." She paused for a moment to let her words sink in. "At that time, you hadn't been treated. What you saw might be difficult to tell if it's real, but right now, you're getting better. If you see something, it might likely be real. So, after this, if you see something and you don't know what to do...you can always come back to tell me."

Som nodded in understanding. "Yes, Doctor."



Do we have a right to determine our death?

Whom does the right to die belong to?

If one day you are no longer conscious, do you think you would get your final moment the way you want?

Do you think your family would give you what you want?

If you could determine how to die, where to die, or even when to die, would you want it?

As long as asking for one's own death is still illegal, Guntapat will continue doing it in secret. It's for the sake of his patient's pure souls,

for a good death his patients wish for, and for the perfect design of one's death.

For Guntapat, the practice isn't a murder, but the way he cares for his patients...

With his mercy.

Special Chapter No.1

Gifts

Bam!

The loud noise from outside, followed by the dog barking, drew Wasan's attention to the door. He was cleaning the dining table, so he put down the rag and walked out to check it.

He saw Gunn trying to move a shoe cabinet away from the area Wasan usually parked his motorcycle. Actually, it had been settled that Wasan would be the one who moved the cabinet himself. However, for some unknown reason, Gunn decided to do it, despite the fact that his gunshot wound hadn't yet fully recovered. As a result, the shoe boxes on the cabinet fell off, and the pain shot to his shoulder. Gunn gripped his shoulder and frowned.

Wasan crossed his arms over his chest, watching his boyfriend with a grim expression. "Why are you being so stubborn?"

"It's not that heavy, I thought I could lift it." Gunn simpered at Wasan.

"You've always gotten yourself in trouble. You never listen to me or my advice. If you're so confident, then go ahead. It's pointless talking to you." Wasan gave him a series of lecture. "Next time, don't ask for my opinion!"

Wasan turned back to the house, not letting Gunn to answer or apologize.

Gunn scratched the back of his head. "Whoa, my wife is so fierce indeed."

"What did you say?" Wasan yelled from inside the house. Gunn smiled from the corner of his mouth and followed Wasan inside.

This had happened for several times. Wasan was the man who followed discipline and righteousness while Gunn always did unexpected things. It was natural that there were some conflicts between them from time to time. However, never once couldn't they manage to reconcile because Gunn always knew how to save the day.

Wasan liked being touched for he had never refused Gunn's touch.

Gunn wrapped his arms around Wasan from behind. He ignored him and kept cleaning the table. Gunn locked both of Wasan's arms under his embrace to stop what he was doing, and then nuzzled the back of Wasan's ear. He tried to move his head away, but Gunn tightened his hold.

"I'm sorry, Babe."

"Your apology means nothing since you've never tried to fix it." Wasan tried to free himself from Gunn's embrace. "Let go of me."

"It's my bad habit. I'm reckless and I think too little."

"You know it."

"Alright then, how can I make you stop being angry? How can I make it up to you?"

Wasan turned around to face Gunn, who moved his hands to Wasan's waist. "I'm not angry. I'm just worried that one day you might end up dead because you're being like this."

Gunn let out a laugh. "I promise I'll make it right. If you see me misbehave, you can always yell or scold at me." He raised his hand to Wasan's face and used his thumb to massage the knitted eyebrows. "Stop frowning. You'll be thirty-four years old in two days, but you'll look older by then."

Wasan quirked up his eyebrows in surprise. "That's right! My birthday is coming soon."

"The older you are, the more you forget about your birthday. This must be true."

Wasan huffed, looking at the man's face with eyes full of worries and concerns. "I'd be glad if you could stop being reckless in everything you do. You know that I don't want to see you getting hurt. I love you so much. I want you to think harder before doing

something. Think of the consequence to yourself and others. And think of my feelings, you got it?"

After hearing Wasan's love confession, Gunn held him in his arms even tighter. "I'm sorry I make you worry. I promise I'll be more careful after this."

Having a soft heart was Wasan's flaw, especially when Gunn was the one who came to him, whispered sweet words to him, and used a gentle touch to him. With this level of sweetness, even the strongest minded person could crumble like a heap of sand. Wasan no longer questioned or resisted his feeling. He dared to say he was even more head over heels in love with Gunn than before. He emphasized this fact by tilting his head upward and accepting the kiss from Gunn. The anger inside him immediately disappeared as if it had never existed when Gunn's warm tongue parted his mouth.

Gunn pressed Wasan against the dining table and pushed himself between his boyfriend's legs. His naughty hands moved around the back and shoved under the waistband. Wasan closed his eyes, making a soft moan in his throat, letting his body and mind wander. In this situation, he couldn't escape, both his body and heart.

"Should we limit our activity?" Wasan asked while he let warm water from the shower run through his head. His heart was still hammering from their bed activity a moment ago. Indeed, he had never got tired of it, but sometimes, Wasan felt like their passion could blaze up easier than fire and oil. He didn't want to admit that he also liked what they had just done, but it could be proved from the way he had never refused Gunn for once. However, when he came to think of it, it was quite embarrassing. "This is getting too much."

Gunn nestled himself against Wasan's back, kissing his wet shoulder. "Too much, but you let me do anyway."

"You always start it."

"I do, but you let me go on every time," Gunn emphasized. Wasan couldn't help throwing his arm to the man who was smiling smugly. Gunn burst out laughing and changed the subject. "Do you want anything special on your birthday?"

"You don't have to give me anything. Just make it another ordinary day." Wasan turned back to the man who squeezed his large body to

take a shower with him.

“Let me do something special for you on your birthday.” Gunn held Wasan’s waist and pulled him against his body. He looked at Wasan with puppy dog eyes. “Tell me what you want. No need to be considerate. No matter how expensive it is, I’ll buy it for you.”

Wasan appeared deep in thought. “Buy me a car, then.”

“Brands, models, colors?”

Wasan frowned when his boyfriend seemed to be unaware that he was just trying to test him. “Not even hesitate? It’s a car, not a candy bar.”

“I can give you my life. One car is no biggie.”

Wasan looked another way, puffing out his breath to ventilate the heat on his face before turning back to his boyfriend with a tedious look. He draped his arms around Gunn’s neck. “I’m just kidding. On my birthday, I only want you to take me to the temple in the morning^[43]. Then, take me, Thongkum, and Gai to have delicious lunch together. That’s all.”

Gunn reached out to turn off the water before moving his hand to caress Wasan’s back. “Whatever you want.”



Gunn put both of his hands into his lab coat’s pocket. He was standing around the front of the psychiatric assessment room. A thin, male patient, who’d just finished his session walked out of the room with his prescription. He looked up and saw Gunn who had an unreadable smile on his face. Som felt like he was cursed into a statue. Even his vocal cord became instantly paralyzed.

Gunn didn’t utter a single word. He looked at Som with an emotionless face. The thin man was trembling. He was terrified more than seeing a ghost.

The most frightening aspect was that he couldn’t and wouldn’t know what the other man was thinking.

Dr. Pang, who followed Som out of the room, was also looking at Gunn with a guilty feeling. Gunn knew that she was the one who called the police and reported that Som was a witness who saw the

practice of his mercy killing. But when the real murderer of this case turned out to be Dr. Somsak, Gunn had no reason to fear. He greeted her with modesty as he always did, pretending not to know who Som was. “Hi, Pang.”

“Hi.” Pang accepted his greeting in an uncharacteristically dull manner. “Is there anything I can help you?”

“Next month, there will be a lecture for VHV about depression. If you’re free—”

“Gunn, can we talk inside?” Pang interrupted and turned to look at her patient. “Som, you should go take your medicine. And I’ll see you in two months.”

Som blinked repeatedly as if he was trying to compose himself and hurriedly walked away from the assessment room. Pang led Gunn into the empty examination room and gestured to the chair. “Please take a seat.”

Gunn looked at Dr. Pang while sliding the door shut, and sat on the chair that was usually reserved for the patients. Pang walked back to the chair for the examiner and fixed her gaze on Gunn. “I still didn’t have a chance to offer you my apology,” She said with an obvious remorse.

Gunn smiled slightly. “It’s okay, Pang. I’d have done the same if I were you.”

“Soon after I called the police, they issued an arrest warrant on you. You had to find a way to defend yourself, so you were risking your life.” She sighed. “I was overconfident. It’s my fault that I couldn’t tell whether my patient had really seen it or just his fantasy.”

“But he still looked shocked when he saw me.” Gunn clasped his hands together, staring at Pang with an expression that was difficult to read. “Does he still see me as the Grim Reaper?”

“I don’t think so. He no longer talked about the Grim Reaper. As for his claim that he saw you kill someone, he told me he’d try to tell himself that it’s just his illusion.”

Gunn went silent for a second. He tried to evaluate Pang’s reaction, but saw nothing except her dimmer gaze. “That’s a great news. I was shocked too when he called me that. And the chaos that

occurred at the same time was so coincident. It must be my misfortune.”

Pang let out a sigh. “Alright, how about I help you with every work you ask as my apology.”

“No need to do that. You can help me any time you’re convenient. I’ll send you an invitation letter.”

After he had had a chat with Dr. Pang, Gunn left the psychiatric assessment room with a lighter heart. He didn’t come here just to invite Dr. Pang to work with him as usual. He came here to see her reaction to what Som had told her.

What Som had seen wasn’t the hallucination. It was real.

The Grim Reaper he saw was a man of flesh and blood, but this fact had to be concealed continually as Som’s mental disorder. Gunn wouldn’t do anything to Som or Dr. Pang because he was positive that no one would dare to mention the Grim Reaper ever again.



Wasan rode his motorcycle to Gunn’s house after he visited the accident scene. The cloudburst after the hot weather had soaked his entire clothes. Now, the rain had stopped, and Wasan was about to arrive home. He was so ready to fly through the door and take a bath, then put on some dry clothes. His uniform was wet, heavy, and tight, making him super uncomfortable.

When Wasan took a turn, he found a black SUV in front of the house, and Gunn’s car parked behind the fence. Wasan hesitated when he saw this. Gunn might have a guest inside the house at the moment. If he appeared like this, would he startle the guest?

Wasan was about to turn his motorcycle back and headed to his own house to change his clothes when he heard Gunn called him. “Wasan!”

He paused and turned to look at the man who was opening the gate. “Are you having guests? I can go back home first.”

“This is your home now. Where would you go?” Gunn gestured to the parking lot with a smile. “Come in.”

“Aren’t you having someone over?” Wasan pointed his mouth to the SUV with the red license plate.

“Having guests or not, you can always come into our home.” Gunn was still giving this strange smile to Wasan. “Hurry inside, Babe.”

How eager you want me inside!

Wasan was starting to doubt his boyfriend’s act. When he got inside and saw a huge bouquet of flowers on the sofa, he finally understood Gunn’s suspicious behavior.

Gunn walked towards the bouquet of white roses and came back to Wasan. “Happy birthday.”

“It’s tomorrow.” Wasan looked at the beautiful roses that should be expensive. “You always give me flowers.”

“Don’t complain that I’m extravagant. Please, take it.” Gunn handed the roses to him.

Wasan took it with a look of confusion, but when he had a good look at the bouquet, he found that in the middle of those white roses, a black object lied within. Wasan knitted his eyebrows and reached into the flowers before picking it up. It was a car remote key which he had never seen before. Suddenly, Wasan gaped. He was stunned for some time before looking up at the man who was smiling at him.

“Don’t tell me...”

“Yup, that car is yours.”

He didn’t know what to do for a while. “No, no, I cannot accept this.” Wasan hurriedly handed the key back to Gunn with an alarmed gaze. “This is too much. I’m planning to save money to buy one myself.”

Gunn reached for Wasan’s hand, but didn’t take the key back. “I want to give it to you. The money you save, you can use it with something else.”

Wasan hesitated. Growing up in a poor family, he had to be thrifty. Even though his salary now was more than enough for him to live without being too thrifty, Wasan still chose not to bring liability to himself until these days. “I don’t have much money to pay for that expensive car, even in installments...”

“I bought it with cash.”

No surprise Gunn was the 'God of Unpredictability'. His answered shut Wasan up. Wasan dropped his gaze on the floor and muttered to himself, "Rich people."

Gunn laughed while approaching him and pulling Wasan into his arms. Gunn bent down and kissed his forehead gently. "Please use this car, so you won't get wet on your way home. I'm always worried when you use the motorcycle. Take this gift for me, okay? If you don't use it, I see no point why I must have two cars."

Wasan raised his head to look at the other man. "You want me to be indebted to you on purpose, right? Apart from the car's debt, I've already owed you my life because you took the bullet for me."

"Yes, I do. I want you to pay your debt by being beside me. Forever." Gunn held Wasan's hand up to kiss. "I love you the most in this world."

You overused the word of love. Wasan kept thinking this, but strangely, he had never gotten tired of Gunn's repeated confession of love. Instead, it made his heart fluttering every time.

Wasan wrapped his fingers around the car key tightly as an acceptance of Gunn's expensive gift. He didn't want to accept it, but he couldn't deny that he was joyful and excited. He couldn't wait to take a shower, changed his clothes and tried the first brand-new car in his life.

Special Chapter No.2

The Story Waiting to Be Discovered

“Wow, Inspector!”

A greeting from Lieutenant Kong can be heard once Wasan stepped down from the shiny black SUV after he had parked it in the parking lot next to the police station. He gently closed the door and turned to raise his brows at Kong, who was looking at his brand-new car with a stunned look.

“What’s up, Lieutenant Kong?” Wasan pretended like there was nothing new.

“Did you win a lottery?” Kong observed the car.

“Well, just have enough credit to buy a new car. Everyone has it. Nothing to be excited.” Wasan squared his shoulders and adjusted his collar. “Let’s get to work.”

“It must’ve been the Doc’s money.”

“Doctor’s money is also mine.” Wasan intentionally said that to tease another man. He then patted his car hood. “This is just a birthday present. It won’t hurt his pocket.”

Kong made a jealous face like a villain in a drama. “If you show off like this, I wouldn’t dare buying any gift for Tum.”

“You can buy anything you want. Either it’s 10 Baht or 100 Baht, if the present is from their loved ones, the receivers will always be happy.” Wasan looked at his big gift and then sighed softly. “You can say that I’m a rat in a rice barrel^[44], but I’m used to all the gossips and complaints. I’ve nothing to care.”

“I haven’t said anything. But if someone does that, you don’t have to pay attention to their words.” Kong gestured to the entrance. “Let’s

do the job we love.”

Wasan followed Kong to the police station, but then he thought of something. He extended his hand to stop Kong and asked him, “Are you free this evening?”

“If Tum doesn’t ask me to go anywhere, then I’m free.”

“Let’s go to my birthday dinner. Please extend Tum the invitation.” Wasan invited Kong who gladly accepted it with a big sincere smile.

“Really? If the Doc’s okay with it, then I’d like to join.”

“He wouldn’t mind.” Wasan squeezed Kong’s shoulder softly before heading to the office. “Let’s meet at 7 p.m., I’ll send the location through LINE.”

“Roger that, sir! I’m glad that I’ll have dinner with your boyfriend. I’ll also introduce Tum to everyone.”

Wasan relaxingly smiled. Although his work environment had not changed much, now Wasan had one more colleague whom he could share things and truly understood him even if they had not liked each other when they first met. Now, Wasan and Kong became good friends and helped each other every time they could.

When he got to his desk, Wasan looked at his phone to see the application showing the location of Dr. Guntapat’s car. Since Dr. Somsak’s case was closed, Gun had not gone off the track. Wherever he claimed, it was matched with the location that Wasan saw every time. Wasan had confessed to Gunn that he was tracking his movement, and this allowed him to save Gunn’s life on time on the day he encountered Somsak. He promised he would remove the tracking device, but Gunn let it stay there until Wasan was satisfied with his behavior. Gunn even shared the location of his phone to Wasan.

At this point, there was nothing to be paranoid. Wasan finally thought he could live his life with the person he loved peacefully.



The songs, the lights, fancy drinks, and delicious foods were unfamiliar for Thongkum and his wife. Of course, these fancy things came from the person Thongkum had used to call as his

mom's personal doctor, who had openly become his 'brother-in-law' for several months. Thongkum felt awestruck with everything, even how to use a fork with spaghetti carbonara, he had to ask Gai for help.

The other couple who sat next to each other were Kong and Tum. Wasan glanced at them with curiosity on how Kong would react in front of his boyfriend. He thought it was adorable that the pineapple-eyed detective became Tum's minion. Seeing Kong put some food into Tum's dish, Wasan couldn't help smiling all the time.

Wasan and Gunn, who were hosts on Wasan's birthday party tonight, was sitting together across from Thongkum and Gai. Gunn sat really close to Wasan and was the one who took care of everyone's drinks.

"You shouldn't have," Thongkum said when the doctor-waiter brought German Pork Hocks to the table. "Please, let us help you pay for the meal, Doctor."

"Brother, there's no need to be considerate." Gunn replied with a smile. "And please call me Gunn."

"Well, I felt rather strange to call you that..."

"See? My brother doesn't want to welcome you to our family." Wasan shamelessly spoke, making Thongkum jump and look shocked.

Thongkum scolded at his younger brother. "Wasan! What did you say?!"

"He wants you to call him that. What's so hard about it?"

Gunn pretended like he didn't understand northern dialect they were saying, even though he actually did. The northern accent was so pleasant to hear. Usually, Wasan would speak this way with his family members, close friends, or local merchants. But Gunn didn't have so many chances to hear that when they were alone together. Wasan thought that Gunn wouldn't understand his dialect because he came from the metropolitan. However, Wasan had no idea that Gunn had practiced the dialect by himself until he could tactfully mimic the accent of the locals. Gunn had even fooled someone by this.

Gunn put his hand on Wasan's thigh, looking at him with a gaze full of love. Wasan stopped quarreling with his brother and turned to

look at him with a smile. Today, he looked so happy that his face glowed with happiness. It was the face of the man who had no clue that Gunn was holding a 'needle of death' behind his back. Wasan could never ever know about this, or else Gunn would lose him forever. It would never happen, no matter what.

"Um, Doctor." Kong interrupted. "Can I ask you something?"

"Of course, Lieutenant" Gunn looked at him.

"What do you like in Inspector Wasan."

Tum widened his eyes and glanced at Kong, shocking with the question. "Why did you ask about their private matter?"

"I asked the question to build up the atmosphere." Kong quirked up his eyebrows. "Because Dr. Gunn's answer tonight would be a great gift for Wasan."

Tum grew tired of his boyfriend's big mouth. Fortunately, Gunn and Wasan didn't seem to mind this.

Gunn smiled broadly, then sipped his beer and cleared his throat as if he was going on public speaking. "Wasan's cute. He might look tough, but he actually is very kind. He's an honest and straightforward person. I felt comfortable whenever I'm with him." Gunn moved his hand to hold Wasan's. "Plus, based on his appearance, he has an excellent figure. He looks really great, especially when he's in the police uniform. I like it."

Kong let out a cheer while Thongkum and Gai smiled broadly. "You have to put the greasy fried chicken down, Inspector!"

"I'm still eating!" Wasan picked up the fried chicken leg, took a big bite and threw the bone on the dish bashfully. Everyone at the table burst out laughing.

The time quickly passed by, and it was now 11 p.m. The blissful moment made the time run faster than they expected. After taking a selfie group photo, the three couples went their separate ways. Kong and Tum left the restaurant and walked towards Kong's car that was parked on the side of the road.

"They seem to love each other very much." Tum mentioned. "The way Professor Gunn looks at Inspector Wasan gives him away how much he loves him."

“Isn’t the way I look at you telling you how much I love you?” Kong drew his face closer to Tum.

Tum pushed his face away. “It’s telling nothing!”

Both of them slid inside the black car. While Tum was reaching for the seat belt, Kong caught his shoulder to stop him. Tum gazed at Kong, whose half of his face was in the shadow. The thing he saw clearly was the different way Kong looked at him.

“I love you as much as Gunn loves Wasan.”

Tum’s breath hitched. Kong rarely confessed the word of love to him. “You don’t want them to take all the credits, so you tell me this?”

“Yes.” Kong combed through Tum’s hair and put his hand on his cheek. “I feel inferior to many people. I’m not good looking, rich, or nice, comparing to Doc...I’m scared you’re going to regret choosing me.”

Tum let out his breath loudly and smiled. “I’ve chosen the best guy for myself, Lieutenant. Even though Dr. Guntapat hit on me the same time you do, I would’ve chosen you anyway.” Tum stroked Kong’s muscular chest. “You’re more vulnerable than I think.”

Kong grabbed Tum’s palm and kissed it before pulling him closer. He kissed Tum’s attractive lips passionately.

Tum gladly accepted the kiss and was even eager to go further with the activity they should have waited to do when they got back home. However, this nurse wasn’t as innocent as he looked at all. After he pulled his lips from Kong, he lowered himself down to Kong’s laps, removed his belt and pulled down the zip.

Kong leaned into the driver seat and closed his eyes. Emitting the low groan. he placed his hands on Tum’s head which was moving up and down rhythmically.

No one stopped each other. Everything happened with both their consents.

They truly belonged to each other.



“Lieutenant Guin!” Kong jumped to lock his colleague’s neck from behind, not even caring that Lieutenant Gawin was busy

with the legal documents. “What are you doing? You seemed stressful. Didn’t your wife let you fuck her?”

Gawin sucked his lips in annoyance. “Leave me alone! And why are you sticking around the office lately?”

“I promise my boyfriend I wouldn’t do a risky job. So, right now, I only send my minions to find the information. What is this, by the way?” Kong pulled a paper from Gawin’s hands.

It was an autopsy report, indicating the cause of death: Died from cancer.

“It’s Dr. Somsak’s aftermath. Right now, people are requesting the autopsy whenever there’s someone dies in their house.” Gawin sighed. “What should we do if we find another lethal injection case?”

“There would be no more such cases, except Doctor...”

“Doctor...?”

“...Dr. Somsak’s vengeful spirit went stealing the terminal stage patients’ souls again.”

Gawin shot his eyes upon the ceiling, growling. “Go fuck yourself.”

Kong burst out a laugh, and quickly walked away before Gawin’s leather shoes would fly into his face. He walked to the desk of another officer who was in the middle of the mission outside. Kong crossed his legs on the desk, relaxing. The silence fell onto the office for a while before Gawin destroyed it.

“Really, if I am on my deathbed, I’d rather die than becoming my grandkids’ burden. If I were the patient and learned that someone could do that for me, I might’ve asked him or her to help take my life.”

Kong stared out of the window absent-mindedly, seeing the black clouds gradually sinking, which was a sign that it was going to rain soon.

“I think Dr. Somsak wasn’t the only one who did this.” Kong playfully swiveled a pen on the desk. “There must be someone who has the same thought as him out there. It depends on whether that person will wait for the method of euthanasia to be legalized first or choose to do it on his own illegally. Our job is to arrest the one who chooses the latter...to be penalized.”

After Kong finished talking, the first drop of rain hit the roof. Although Kong had many eyes out there, he could never know

everything that happened.

There were still so many things waiting to be discovered.

It might be useful or useless, or both, but Kong believed that among the sea of stories, there was some truth that could suddenly change everything once you found it out. It could throw you off guard, turning the story that you once believed into another story.

Pol.Sub-Lt. Archa knew in his guts that it wasn't over yet.

THE END

Acknowledgement

Hello there, it's me, Sam.

Here is where 'Spare Me Your Mercy' ends. How do you feel about it? Please R&R for me!

First of all, I want to thank every reader who reads this novel of mine to this point. Thank you for every support you gave me. I'm very grateful of that.

At some point, the controversial issue of the method of euthanasia has gone viral in Thailand. As Dr. Guntapat said, the practice is still illegal here, even if it's the patients' own willingness. Impelling legalization of euthanasia wouldn't be so easy due to our religious issue, practice supervision, and criteria set for euthanasia.

However, in Thailand, we have National Health Act 2007, which states in the Section 12^[45] that '*A person shall have the right to make a living will in writing to refuse the public health service which is provided merely to prolong his/her terminal stage of life or to make a living will to refuse the service as to cease the severe suffering from illness.*' Supposed that you don't want to see yourself going through medical procedure like CPR or intubation in your final moment, while you are still fully conscious, you can make a living will to express your wish to the medical team to take care for you the way you want.

Morally grey is the most suitable words to describe this fiction, and there are many shades of grey. Wasan was a character on the bright side. His thoughts were somewhat opposite to his behaviors. He liked that there was a handsome guy coming to court him, and he easily followed that guy home. He was so blind by infatuation that he chose to tell the lies to protect the man he wasn't even sure whether he was

a good person. Honestly, I intended to present a diversity of human variation through this fiction.

The protagonists' hasty relationship came from my observation and from my interview with my close friend, who is gay. Their courtship is frank and quickly jumps into sex. I wrote them the way I see this relationship's pattern. However, it doesn't mean that every gay couple would follow this norm. I just want to present that there is this kind of courtship in real life. (The truth is, I'm not good at writing romantic scene either, lol.)

This is my second boy's love/crime/suspense fiction and is a sequel to 'Manner of Death,' in which Dr. Bunn, the pathologist who has important role in this novel, is the protagonist of the story. If you are wondering why Bunn resigned from his position and what's wrong with Janejira's case, you could figure it out in the 'Manner of Death.' (Fictionlog is considering to translate it. Tell them if you'd love to!)

As for the sequel of 'Spare Me Your Mercy', I've already had a plan in my mind, but it's so large-scale that I might have to give my time to other stories on queue.

You can follow my latest news and updates on my twitter @Sammon_scene

Thank you again. And see you in my next fiction.

After listening to this, I asked myself whether this was wrong; the thing that the doctor did. When my time comes, do I even have a right to die with dignity? The concept of euthanasia is closer to us than you might think, for everyone dies eventually anyway. But how should we die and who is the one to determine our death? Ourselves or someone else?

All to these questions, you might find out the answers in 'Spare Me Your Mercy' by Sammon.

*Thank you for reading this book. Have you enjoyed it?
If so, why don't you share it with others? Use hashtag
#SpareMeYourMercy and #Fictionlog to talk with others
who also love this story.
Don't forget to review this book in Amazon & Goodreads!*

[1] Endometrial Cancer

[2] A specialized care for patients who suffer serious illness or terminal diseases, aiming to help them and their family find a better way to live with it.

[3] Putting money in an envelope and then giving to the relatives of the dead when visiting the funeral is a tradition to show lament in Thailand.

[4] Nonthaburi is a province in the central region of Thailand, located nearby Bangkok.

[5] 'Aye' is a casual prefix in Thai Northern dialect used before the name of elder person, comparable with 'Bro' or 'Sis'.

[6] This open space under the house is called 'Taitun'. In Thai culture, the old-style Thai house always have high space under the house to prevent a poisonous animals and flood

[7] 'Jao' is a final particle of the statement in Thai Northern dialect, in order to convey politeness.

[8] A type of medicine often used to treat allergies and symptoms like runny nose, congestion and sneezing.

[9] PS, as an abbreviation for a Police Station.

[10] One of the Family Medicine residency programs

[11] The ground pork salad, one of Thai dish with a mix of Eastern and Northern style.

[12] A specialty that focuses on healthcare of elderly people.

[13] A ghoulish is one type of ghosts in Thai culture. Those who possessed by the demon have to be fed fresh and blood of the living things.

[14] Thai funeral usually holds the rite at night, and it could be 1, 3, 5, or 7 nights, depends on the relatives. Normally starting from 7 p.m. and it takes around 30 minutes to 1 hour. After the rite, people stay for the reception till very late, drinking and having a conversation with the relatives, mainly to console them.

[15] A condition when the patient's heart stops beating.

[16] FM, as an abbreviation of Family Medicine.

[17] A sterile test tube with a colored rubber stopper used to contain blood sample and other fluids in a vacuum condition.

[18] An analysis to measure the acidity, or pH, from an artery, as well as determine the ability of oxygen exchange in one's body.

[19] A central nervous system depressant using as an anxiolytic drug and a sleeping pill.

[20] Serum blood level describes the amount of a given medication present in your blood at the time of testing.

[21] Muscle 'tone' is the muscle's normal tension at rest. In a tonic seizure, the tone is greatly increased: the body, arms, or legs become suddenly stiff or tense.

[22] The practice of adjusting medicine to patients as prescribed by a doctor to control the pain at all time.

[23] Outpatient Department

[24] A popular Thai brand of cooling power.

[25] Intramuscular injection

[26] A proverb that being used widely in Thailand; meaning a person who is good at spying or acquiring information like he or she has eyes everywhere, seeing everything in all directions. This is because a pineapple after peeling has the spines inside that are revealed in small, round recesses, and they look like eyes.

[27] Village Health Volunteer

[28] Ovarian cancer

[29] The operation of making a permanent opening into the stomach, for the introduction of food.

[30] A bone in the base on the tongue.

[31] A medication machine for providing medication through the skin. The patient could bring stabilizing medicine back home.

[32] A meeting with patients, their families, and treatment teams to provide healthcare information and objectives of the treatment.

[33] A medical title commonly referred to a medical graduate engaged in specialized practice under supervision in a hospital.

[34] A Northern Thai Green Chilli Dip

[35] A Thai Spicy Mixed Vegetable Soup

[36] A Thai Noodle-like sweetmeat eaten with coconut cream

[37] A Rai is a unit of area equal to 1,600 square meters (16 ares, 0.16 hectares, 0.3954 acres), and is commonly used in Thailand to measure land area for a cadastral map.

[38] A Thai pronoun equal to 'chase two rabbits catch none'

[39] Water chestnut is an aquatic tuber vegetable Thai people consume. Its transliteration is 'Haew' which means unrequited love in Thai language.

[40] Respiratory failure due to infected lungs.

[41] The Buddhist nun (a Bhikkhunī in Pali or Bhikṣuṇī in Sanskrit) in Thailand wears white robe.

[42] Thai Buddhists believes that they could make merits for the soul of the departed through the alms given to monks.

[43] Thai people normally go to the temple on their birthday to give alms to the monks, hoping to have a good year.

[44] Thai pronoun used to define a poor person who luckily gets married with a wealthy person.

[45] http://thailawforum.com/laws/National%20Health%20Act_2007.pdf