



Some Kind of Love

BELLE FELIZ

CHAPTER ONE

“Relax,” pagkausap ni Yelina sa sarili kahit na abala na ang mga mata niya sa pagtingin sa mga pagkain. “Don’t obsess over it. There’s enough food for everyone,” dagdag niya. “You made sure of that a week ago.”

Napangiti siya nang maramdaman niyang may yumakap sa kanya. Kaagad siyang gumanti ng yakap, mas mahigpit. Mariin din niyang hinagkan ang gilid ng ulo ng kanyang anak na si Lennon. She was the love of her life. She could not believe she was already going away for college. Abroad.

Inutusan niya ang sarili na pakawalan ang

dalaga niya. Ipinaalala niya sa sarili na hindi mahalaga ang anumang nararamdamang niya, kung nahihiapan man ang kalooban niya. Ang tanging mahalaga ay ang kaligayahan ng anak. Hindi mawawala ang labis na takot, pag-aalala at masidhing kagustuhan na panatilihin sa tabi niya si Lennon, pero alam din niya na hindi niya maaaring pigilan ang paglipad nito.

Her daughter needed to explore the world. She needed to see what was out there for her.

She might stumble and get hurt, but she needed to be tough for the world. She needed to make mistakes and learn from them.

Mahirap lang talagang panindigan ang mga bagay na iyon. Labis siyang nahihiapan sa kaalaman na isang linggo na lang ay lilipad na ito pa-Amerika at mamumuhay nang mag-isá malayo sa kanila.

“You’re not gonna cry,” natatawang sabi ni Lennon. “Mom, you promised me.”

Pinamasaan pa rin siya ng mga mata. “Yes,

I did. And I'm not gonna cry. Are you happy?"

Lennon squeezed her tight. "Of course, Mom. I'm with friends and family. The food is great. Everyone's nice and getting along. Everyone's excited and happy for me."

They had invited their closest family and friends for a barbecue. Hindi gusto ni Lennon ng magara o fussy na party. Gusto lang nitong makasama ang mga malalapit na kapamilya at kaibigan para makapagpaalam. Yelina did everything to make this day a very special day for her daughter. They invited all her favorite people. She made sure all her favorite food would be available.

"Lola isn't being a pain," nagbibiro pang dagdag ni Lennon. "She's not even giving me the side-eye when I get myself another slice of cake."

Nakahinga siya nang maluwag dahil doon. Kinausap niyang talaga ang sariling ina at pinakiusapan na huwag nang gaanong

punahin pa si Lennon. Hindi niya gustong marinig na pinupuna nito ang suot ng anak niya, ang ayos nito, at lalong-lalo na ang timbang nito.

Lennon was not even overweight. The grandmother had just a very unrealistic and unhealthy beauty standards. She was very critical when it came to appearance. She did it to Yelina while growing up and she vowed she would never let her do the same to her daughter.

When Yelina found out she was having a girl, she vowed she would treat her well and work hard not to make her hate herself as she grew up.

Gusto niyang maniwala na napagtugumpayan naman niya iyon. Lennon was a confident young woman who loved herself. She was also kind to other people. Her daughter was beautiful inside and out.

Yelina was very grateful to have Lennon as her daughter.

Everything in her life made sense because of her.

Lennon was her whole life.

And all she wanted was her daughter to be happy.

“All these people here love you, my darling. They are rooting for you,” aniya habang hinahaplos ang buhok nito.

“And I’m so grateful to have a wonderful family. Thank you, Mom. Thank you for allowing me to fly and convincing Dad that I could do it. Salamat kasi pinagkakatiwalaan mo ‘ko nang husto. I know it’s not easy for you but you’re gonna let me do my own thing because you love me.”

“I’ll be fine,” aniya, parang bibigay na ang kanyang mga luha. “Dad and I will be fine.”

Ang totoo ay hindi sigurado si Yelina sa bagay na iyon. Malakas ang pakiramdam niya na ganap na magbabago ang relasyon nilang mag-asawa sa paglayo ng nag-iisa nilang anak. Hindi niya gustong masyadong pagtuunan

iyon ng pansiñ kaya hindi na muna niya inisip. Itinuon niya ang lahat ng enerhiya na mayroon siya kay Lennon.

She made certain that her move to another country to attend college would go as smoothly as possible. She made sure Lennon had the best time with her friends and cousins before she went abroad. She made sure they had time together as family.

If she ignored something hard enough, it might just go away on its own.

“Auntie Melody is finally here,” sabi ni Lennon kapagkuwan.

Halos wala sa loob na sinundan ni Yelina ang tinitingnan ng anak. Nakita nga niya na naroon na ang hipag niya. Natigilan siya nang mapansiñ na hindi ito nag-iisa. She brought someone. A friend.

Wala namang kasó kay Yelina. Hindi naman siya strict sa plus ones. It was the someone she brought to the party that gave her a pause. She felt betrayed.

Hindi maganda ang relasyon nilang maghipag mula pa sa simula. They were civil on a good day, in their best mood. Melody didn't like her and would never like her. She would never forgive her, she said so herself. Tanggap na niya iyon. Yelina believed she had done her best to create a good relationship between them. Kahit na hopeless mula pa sa simula at kahit na alam niya na seryoso si Melody sa pagdeklara na hindi siya nito mapapatawad kahit na kailan at may parte sa kanya na nakakaunawa, sinubukan pa rin niya. Because they were family, whether they liked it or not.

Maraming beses na siyang nasaktan ng hipag niya. Sa masasakit na mga salita, hindi pagpansin sa kanya, at ilang microaggression na naiipon. Maraming beses na siyang umiyak. But this one took the cake.

This one was her most cruel yet.

She brought Ashley into her home.

“I’m gonna say ‘hi.’”

Tumango lang si Yelina sa sinabi ng anak habang hindi niya inaalis ang paningin kina Melody at Ashley. Nilapitan ng dalawa ang kanyang mother-in-law na kaagad na nagliwanag ang buong mukha nang makita si Ashley. Marcy, her mother-in-law, was obviously delighted to see the woman. They hugged and kissed.

Isang tipid na ngiti lang ang ibinigay ni Marcy sa kanya pagdating ng mga ito kanina. She had never kissed or hugged her. Masakit pa rin kahit na nauunawaan niya ito. Bilang nanay rin siya, naniniwala siya na magiging ganoon din siya kapag naranasan ni Lennon ang mga naranasan ni Melody.

Yelina had always been forgiving and understanding when it came to her mother-in-law. Pero masakit pa ring makita mismo ng mga mata niya ang turing nito kay Ashley. The happiness and the warmth, dapat ay kanya iyon. She was her daughter-in-law. The mother of her beloved grandchild. The wife of

her son.

Hindi si Ashley.

Pero kagaya ni Melody, mukhang hindi siya kailanman mapapatawad maging ng biyenan niya.

Nakita siya ni Melody na nakatingin. She smiled smugly. Her eyes were telling her she deserved this.

Yelina knew she didn't, but she decided to let this pass. Hindi niya sigurado kung paano niya iyon mapagtatagumpayan, pero pagsusumikapan niya dahil hindi ito tungkol sa kanya. This day was all about her Lennon.

She could bear anything for her daughter.

She decided to look for Poetry, her husband. Hindi niya sigurado kung kailangan niya ng reassurance. She hated the thought of it. She wanted to believe she was not an insecure woman. She was no longer. She was too old for this kind of drama with herself. She and Poetry had been married for so long. They had an eighteen-year-old daughter. An

ex from a lifetime ago should not feel like a threat. An ex should not be able to shake the foundation of their marriage.

Foundation.

What was the foundation of her marriage? Lennon.

Nakita niya ang pamilyar na likod ng asawa. He was talking to Dave, an old bandmate. Her husband used to be in a band. A very successful and popular band. When they had officially disbanded, he and another friend from another band founded an independent music label. The label was established and doing well now.

Parehong nakatalikod ang dalawa sa kanya kaya hindi siya nakita ng mga ito na palapit. Inihanda niya ang ngiti at ibinuka ang bibig para bumati pero natigilan siya nang marinig ang pag-uusap ng mga ito.

“Your daughter is lovely,” sabi ni Dave. “And very talented. Hindi madaling makapasok sa school na napili niya. You must

be so proud.”

Mas napangiti si Yelina. Kahit na hindi niya nakikita ang mukha ni Poetry, alam niya na nakangiti rin ang asawa niya. They were both proud Lennon got into a good school, the school she had always wanted.

Nagsalita uli si Dave bago pa man makatugon si Poetry. “Sulit ang lahat ng sakripisyo mo, bro. You married the woman you didn’t love. I can only imagine how hard it must have been for you. You’ve sacrificed so much. You became a dad when you were barely twenty-one. But your daughter is a fine lovely young woman, and you have your own music label now. Everything is worth it, I guess.”

Mabilis na pumihit si Yelina at lumayo. Hindi niya alam kung saan siya magtutungo pero alam niya na kailangan niyang lumayo. Nginitian siya ng ilang mga taong nakasalubong niya at pinagsumikapan naman niyang gantihan ang mga ngiti na iyon, hindi

lang niya sigurado kung ngiti ba o ngiwi ang lumabas.

Nakasalubong niya ang kanyang ina. Huli na para umiwas. Hinawakan nito ang braso niya na para bang nahuhulaan nito na hindi niya ito gustong kausap. Base sa ekspresyon ng mukha nito, alam niya na hindi niya ikatutuwa ang mga lalabas sa bibig nito.

“My God, Yelina, what kind of food are you serving here?”

“Barbeque, Mom. It’s a barbecue. There are burgers and other meats. There are salads and cakes. Mga paborito ni Lennon. You don’t have to eat. Close your eyes if you don’t wanna see the food.”

Nanlaki ang mga mata nito, parang hindi makapaniwala sa mga sinabi niya. She was usually calmer and more patient. Pero sadyang wala siyang panahon para maging banayad sa ina niya. Her mother was not going to ruin this for Lennon.

Inalis niya ang kamay nito at itinuloy niya

ang paglayo. Pumasok siya sa loob ng bahay. Walang gaanong mga tao roon dahil nasa labas ang lahat. Ilang staff ang lumapit sa kanya at may mga itinanong. It took so much of her to focus and answer, but she did it.

Narating niya ang living room at ipinagpasalamat niya na walang tao roon. Humugot siya ng malalim na hininga bago siya umupo sa sofa. Pilit niyang kinalma ang sarili. Hindi siya iiyak. Kaya niya iyong ipagpalibat.

It was not a big deal. Alam naman niya dati pa ang mga narinig, hindi na bago. Hindi na rin bago ang tingin sa kanya ng mga kabanda ni Poetry. Dave had been living in Canada. Ngayon lang uli ito nakauwi para magbakasyon. He didn't know them. He didn't know their family.

Hindi niya palalakihin. Hindi siya magdaramdam.

And Ashley—

“I’m so sorry.”

Napapitlag si Yelina nang marinig niya ang tinig ng isang babae. Hindi niya namalayan na hindi na lang siya mag-isa sa living area. Nag-angat siya ng paningin at sinalubong ang tingin ni Ashley. She looked sincere and very apologetic. Maging ang mga mata nito ay humihingi ng tawad.

“I didn’t know we were coming here. Hindi sinabi ni Melody na dito niya ako dadalhin. I’m so sorry, Yelina. Hindi ko intensyon na—”

“It’s fine,” aniya sa mahinang tinig. She could believe what she was telling her. Melody brought her here to rile her up. Nakikita niya na hindi komportable si Ashley.

“It’s not fine, Yelina. Melody is being a—”

“What? I’m being a what?” sabat ni Melody habang palapit. Her tone was already defensive and bitchy.

Bumuntong-hininga si Yelina.

Hinarap ni Ashley si Melody. “You should apologize to her, Melody. This is not cool.”

Nasapo ni Yelina ang noo. Yeah, she was not holding her breath for an apology. It would never come. Melody would rather die than apologize to her.

“There’s no need,” aniya sa mas mahinang tinig. She didn’t need the apology she was never going to get.

“Yeah,” ani Melody, puno ng pang-uuyam sa tinig. “There’s no need. There’s no problem. You got the ring, right, Yelina?”

Halos wala sa loob na napatingin siya sa daliring may suot na engagement at wedding ring. She got the ring. She got the man.

“Melody, you’re being—”

Hindi pinatapos ni Yelina ang anumang sinasabi ni Ashley. Tumayo siya at humugot ng malalim na hininga. “My baby is going to college,” aniya sa mahinahong tinig. “Abroad. She’s going abroad. I feel like I’m losing my baby and it’s not easy for me, okay? Lennon, my baby—my life. Going to college. It’s not the end of the world, but it’s very hard to

process that she's beginning to have her own life. That's all I can think about right now. My emotions are focused on that."

Tumingin si Yelina kay Melody. "I'm sorry kung hindi mo makuha sa akin ang inaasahan mong reaksiyon. Siguro magiging masaya ka sa kaalaman na sobra akong nahihirapan dahil lalayo ang anak ko sa 'kin para mag-aryl. Hindi ko sure kung puwede na, pero hindi talaga ako maka-focus sa ibang bagay. Ito na 'yon. Maybe you can try another time."

"You're still a bitch," tugon ni Melody.

Tumango si Yelina, pagkatapos ay bumaling siya kay Ashley. "Stay. Have fun and I really mean it. Some of your old friends are here and they'd be happy to see you. Poetry would be so happy to see you." Sinikap niyang gawaran ito ng ngiti. She desperately wanted to mean everything she had just told her.

Ashley had always been nice and kind. She appreciated her apologizing.

Gumanti ito ng ngiti. “I’m really sorry. For what you’re going through. I have boys. Seven and five. They grow up so fast.”

“They do.”

“She’s divorced,” sabad ni Melody. “Sooo...”

Pinukol ng masamang tingin ni Ashley si Melody. “My God, Melody—”

“Ma’am?”

Ipinagpasalamat ni Yelina ang pagdating ng isang staff at mukhang may kailangan sa kanya. Hindi na niya nagawang magpaalam sa dalawang babae, naglakad na lang siya patungo sa staff para alamin kung ano ang kailangan nito.

Aabalahan niya ang sarili sa ibang bagay. Tanging anak lang niya ang iiisipin niya. Hindi niya pagtutuunan ng pansin ang nakaraan at kung paano naudlot ang pag-iibigan nina Ashley at Poetry dahil sa kanya.

CHAPTER TWO

Pinagmasdan ni Yelina si Poetry kinagabihan. Nasa walk-in closet slash dressing room silang mag-asawa. Katatapos lang nitong maligo at kasalukuyang nagbibihis ng pantulog. Nakaupo naman siya sa harap ng vanity niya at pinapanood ang asawa sa repleksiyon nito sa salamin. Dapat ay tinutuyo na niya ang buhok niya.

Napansin ni Poetry na nakatingin siya. “You okay?” tanong nito.

Halos wala sa loob na tumango si Yelina. Automatic ang tugon na iyon mula sa kanya sa ganoong tanong nito. She had always been

okay even if she was not.

Nilapitan siya ni Poetry at hinagkan ang ibabaw ng ulo niya. “Alam ko na hindi madali sa ‘yo ang napipintong pag-alis ni Lennon, but it’s going to be okay.”

Tumango si Yelina. “I know.”

She had a long time to come to terms with it. She had prepared herself quite well. Hindi pa rin madali pero naiproseso na niya. Handa siya sa mga emosyon na mararamdam.

Pero iba na ang focus niya ngayon. It had been a long day. Nakita niya na masaya ang anak niya at wala na siyang mahihiling pa. Pag-alis ng huling bisita ay kaagad na umabante ang ilang bagay na pilit niyang isinantabi buong araw.

Melody brought Ashley into her home. Nakita niya na labis ding nagulat si Poetry nang makita ang dating nobya nito. Nagkaroon ng pagkakataon ang dalawa na makapag-usap. She watched from far away and tried very hard not to feel the pain that

had always been there. Kahit na ilang beses pa niyang sabihin sa sarili na wala siyang dahilan para magselos o sumama ang loob, na masyado na siyang matanda para sa mga ganoong pakiramdam, neroon pa rin. Hindi puwedeng hindi niya maramdam.

Masyado nang matagal ang lahat ng pangyayari, pero hindi talaga napag-usapan at na-resolve ang tungkol doon. Naging abala sila ni Poetry sa pagbuo ng pamilya nila. Sa loob ng mahabang panahon ay kay Lennon umikot ang mga mundo nila. They were so young when they had their daughter.

Yelina had just realized that Lennon was the same age she had been when she became pregnant with her. She had a baby at nineteen. Poetry was a dad at twenty-one. They didn't really have the chance to enjoy their youth, their twenties. They had to grow up really fast, walang gaanong panahon para isipin ang ilang bagay. Kailangan nilang maging responsible para sa anak nila kaya

isinantabi nila ang sariling mga kaligayahan.

And now, that baby is going away for college. While watching Poetry and Ashley talk, it occurred to Yelina that they could choose themselves now. Mas maaari na nilang pagtuunan mag-asawa ang pansariling kaligayahan. Iyong mga bagay na naisantabi, maaari nang mas pagtuunan ng pansi.

Yelina saw how happy Poetry's friends were to see him with Ashley. Ayaw niyang masaktan dahil alam din naman niya na may respeto ang mga kaibigan na iyon sa kanya. Pero hindi rin maalis sa kanya ang mga sinabi nina Dave at Melody.

“You married the woman you didn’t love...

You sacrificed a lot.”

“You got the ring.”

Tumingin si Yelina kay Poetry at nginitian niya ang asawa. She was aware why he married her. She didn't forget. She was aware that he was very much in love with Ashley at the time.

Poetry chose her. She got the ring.

Not because he was in love with her more, but because he got her pregnant.

Yelina didn't expect to be thinking about her life today, hindi niya sigurado kung paano niya naisingit pa. Kahit kasi mas gusto niyang pagtuunan ng pansin ang anak ay hindi rin niya mapigilang pakaisipin kung saan napunta at kung saan pupunta ang buhay niya.

Yelina would never regret Lennon. If she had to relive her life, she would gladly make the same decisions she did just to have her as her daughter. Pero siguro ay babaguhin niya ang ilang bagay.

Tumingin siya kay Poetry. She would still love him, but she would not do everything to have him. If she could go back in time, she would still sleep with him, but she would not marry him and force him to love her.

And something inside her seemed to snap in place. Isang desisyong nabuo. Isang

desisyong na hindi niya kailangang pag-isipan pa nang husto. Sigurado siya sa gagawin. Sigurado siya sa gusto.

Hinagkan uli ni Poetry ang ibabaw ng ulo niya bago siya nito iniwan sa closet. Pinanood niya ang pag-alis ng asawa hanggang sa mawala ito sa kanyang paningin. Pagkatapos ay pinagmasdan niya ang sarili sa salamin.

She was beautiful. If she had to teach her daughter how to love herself or to at least not hate herself, she needed to do the same.

Tinapos niya ang nighttime routine niya. Pinatay niya ang mga ilaw sa closet bago niya sinamahan si Poetry sa silid nila. Nakaupo na ang asawa niya sa side nito, hawak nito ang tablet at mukhang may kung anong binabasa roon.

They had a huge bed. Kakasya ang apat na tao sa kama na iyon at makakagalaw nang husto. She remembered she chose that bed because Lennon co-slept with them. She co-slept with them full-time the first seven years

of her life. She had her own room at seven, but she would still often sleep with them. Lennon never really stopped co-sleeping with them.

Hence, the huge bed.

So huge that it was almost the same as them having their own beds.

Imbes na magtungo sa side niya, naglakad siya patungo sa side ni Poetry. Naupo siya sa gilid ng kama. Nag-angat ng paningin si Poetry, salubong ang mga kilay nito at nagtatanong ang mga mata na nakatingin sa kanya.

Kinuha ni Yelina ang tablet, isinara at itinabi sa night table. Bago pa man makapagtanong ang asawa ay inilapit na niya ang sarili para hagkan ang mga labi nito.

Sandali lang natigilan si Poetry. Halos wala sa loob na gumalaw ang mga labi nito at tumugon sa halik niya. She kissed him softly and he kissed her back just as softly.

Naghiwalay ang mga labi nila pero hindi

niya ganap na inilayo ang sarili. Nagtama ang kanilang mga mata. He looked confused but fire started to spark. She was relieved that she still had that effect on her husband.

Hinaplos niya ang dibdib nito, kapagkuwan ay unti-unting bumaba ang kamay niya sa laylayan ng suot nitong T-shirt at pumaloob. Her hand caressed his taut stomach.

“Aren’t you tired?” tanong nito, medyo salubong pa rin ang mga kilay.

Halos wala sa loob na napangiti siya. “Are *you* tired?”

Bilang tugon ay sinakop ng mga labi nito ang mga labi niya. He growled low in his throat as he urged her mouth to open for him. He deepened the kiss. His hand brushed the swell of her breast. Itinaas niya ang kamiseta nito at mabilis nitong nahubad iyon.

Sumampa si Yelina sa kama. Soon enough, she was straddling her husband. Naibaba na nito ang isang strap ng nightgown niya at

hinahagkan nito ang leeg niya.

Her fingers dug into his wet hair. She pulled him off her neck to kiss his lips. Gusto niyang hagkan ang mga labing iyon habang puwede pa. The kiss they shared was hungry and it immediately turned ravenous.

Hinubad niya ang nightgown at ibinaba ni Poetry ang suot na pajama bottom.

He cupped her breast and lifted it to his mouth. Napasabunot uli siya sa buhok nito. She rocked against him, needing relief. The need to orgasm was building.

Her core lined up with him perfectly. He grabbed her hips and pulled her lower to him. They both let out a deliciously painful cry when their bodies became one. Ilang sandali na hindi muna siya gumalaw sa ibabaw nito. Idinikit niya ang noo sa noo nito. Pareho silang naghahabol ng hininga at ninanamnam ang pag-iisa.

I love you. I love you so much. Hindi hinayaan ni Yelina ang sarili na bigkasin ang

mga salita. Mariin niyang kinagat ang ibabang labi.

Poetry thrust his hips while she bucked against him, sending bolts of electricity through her. She closed her eyes and rode him without a single inhibition or flicker of self-consciousness.

Hindi niya hinayaan ang sarili na mag-isip masyado. Hindi niya hinayaan ang sarili na maramdaman ang ilang emosyon. She just wanted to be with him this way. She wanted to have him while she still could.

She ground down on him, circled her hips and rubbed her clit against him. Both of them were so lost in bliss. Moans escaped her throat at the overwhelming sensation. She wanted this to be one of the most extraordinary climaxes in their married life.

His mouth took her nipple again and bit down hard. That set her off. It was one explosion after another, wave upon wave of almost unbearable ecstasy.

Naibagsak niya ang sarili sa asawa. He held on to her thighs and kept himself buried to her; he flipped her to her back. His thrusts were dominating and aggressive. She held onto him and felt herself setting off again. Multiple orgasms with her husband. Bihira iyong mangyari, but it was always magic with him.

Her legs circled around him like steel bands, clenching him tight as she still soared above the earth. As she was starting to come down from the second orgasm, he drove balls deep and poured himself in her with a long, loud roar.

Sa loob ng ilang sandali ay pareho silang hindi gumalaw. Yelina was not aware she was crying until her husband was kissing her tears away. Hindi niya inasahan ang masidhing emosyon. She just wanted to be with him for the last time.

Maybe she was emotional because she knew that. This could be the last time.

Inalis ni Poetry ang sarili sa ibabaw niya. “That was...” anito habang naghahabol ng hininga.

“Nice,” she supplied. Napangiti siya dahil nanumbalik sa kanya ang nakaraan. It was what he said the first time they were together. The one time na nabuo si Lennon. He said it was nice. Sex with her had always been nice. And magical.

Natawa si Poetry. “Sure is...”

“Poetry?”

“Hmn?”

“I think we should file for an annulment.”

There was no response from Poetry. Dahan-dahan niya itong nilingon. Natagpuan niyang nakatingin ang asawa sa kanya, kunot na kunot ang noo. Parang hindi ito makapagpasya kung tama ang narinig nito mula sa kanya o kung tama ang pagkakaintindi nito. Nasa mukha nito ang disbelief. Iyon marahil ang pinakahuling bagay na inaasahan nitong marinig

pagkatapos nilang magniig.

Sinalubong niya ang mga mata nito. “I want an annulment.” Maging siya ay nagulat sa tatag ng kanyang tinig.

Hindi rin niya gaanong mapaniwalaan ang kalma sa kanyang kalooban. Walang takot o pagsisisi. May kaunti ngang relief dahil nasabi niya, nabatid niya na kaya niya pala. Maaaring magbago ang pakiramdam na iyon; maaaring hindi pa talaga niya naipoproseso ang gusto niyang mangyari. Pero malaking parte sa kanya ang naniniwala na iyon ang tamang dapat na gawin. Iyon ang kailangan niya.

It was the right time.

Hindi pa rin kumibo si Poetry. Halos wala sa loob na napangiti siya dahil medyo pamilyar sa kanya ang ganoong reaksiyon. Halos ganoon din ang mukha nito noong sabihin niyang buntis siya.

Gumalaw si Yelina at umisod palapit kay Poetry. Banayad niyang hinagkan ang mga

labi nito. Naramdaman niya ang pagkilos ng mga braso nito para ipaloob siya sa yakap nito, pero mabilis siyang kumilos para kumawala. Bumaba siya ng kama.

“Where are you going?” tanong nito nang maglakad siya palayo.

“We can’t tell Lennon. Saka na kapag settled na siya sa New York.”

Hindi na niya hinintay ang magiging tugon nito, pumasok siya sa loob ng banyo at naglinis ng katawan. Nagsuot siya ng fresh pajamas. Paglabas niya ay nasa kama pa rin ang asawa niya, halos hindi gumalaw sa dating puwesto. Hindi siya bumalik sa kama, tinungo niya ang pinto palabas ng silid nilang mag-asawa.

“We’d really have to talk about this later,” aniya bago niya binuksan ang pinto. “Kapag okay na si Lennon.” Muli, hindi niya hinintay ang sasabihin nito, lumabas na siya at nagtungo sa silid ng anak.

Tinabihan niya si Lennon na kaagad na

naalimpungatan nang maramdaman siya. Niyakap niya ang anak.

“What are you going to do with your life when I’m gone?” anang anak niya habang gumaganti ng yakap.

“I’m gonna be able to finally enjoy my life,” tugon niya sa nagbibirong tinig. Pagkatapos ay bahagya siyang nakaramdam ng guilt nang mabatid na hindi talaga iyon biro.

It was time.

It was time to live their lives.

CHAPTER THREE

Kahit na araw ng Linggo ay maagang nagising si Yelina. Maingat siyang bumaba ng kama ng anak at nagtungo sa kusina. Isang staff pa lang ang gising. Sinabi niya na siya ang maghahanda ng agahan at plano niyang mag-bake.

Habang inihahanda ang mga kailangan niya, kinapa niya ang pakiramdam. Hindi niya alam kung bakit, pero parang hinihintay niya ang pagdating ng bagyo sa kalooban niya. Hinihintay niya na makaramdam siya ng pagsisisi.

Nakatulog naman siya, nakapagpahinga.

Baka naman nabigla lang siya. Baka labis lang niyang dinibdib ang ilang pangyayari kahapon. Medyo inasahan niya na magbabago ang kanyang isip at damdamin, na babawiin niya ang anumang sinabi niya kay Poetry.

Però hindi nagbabago ang desisyon niya. Hindi nawawala ang kalma sa kanya. Parang mas sumisidhi pa ang kasiguruhan na iyon ang gusto niya.

Alam niya na masasaktan naman siya pero parang handa siya roon. Alam niya na hindi magiging madali pero pipilitin niyang kayanin. Parang gusto niya ng bagong buhay kahit na hindi pa siya makabuo ng anumang plano sa ngayon.

Halos patapos na siya sa pagluluto ng agahan nang pumasok sa loob ng kusina si Poetry. Bahagya siyang nagtaka nang mapansin na hindi nito suot ang activewear nito. He was still in his pajamas. Mukhang hindi rin ito gaanong nakatulog.

Bahagya siyang na-guilty sa thought na sinira niya ang peace ng asawa. She just sprung it to him, and she could understand the confusion.

Pero naisip niya na panahon na siguro para mas isipin niya ang sarili. Poetry could deal with everything she was going to have to spring up. Dahil parang hindi na magbabago ang desisyon niya.

“You’re not going out for a run?” kaswal niyang tanong habang pinapanood ang paghahanda nito ng kape. He was not an avid coffee drinker, kapag kailangan lang nito ng caffeine. He usually had water when he woke up and protein shakes after a run. Halos araw-araw na tumatakbo si Poetry.

He drank his coffee. He looked at her and he looked stressed. Tinapos ni Yelina ang ginagawa sa harap ng kalan.

“The thing you said last night—”

“I meant it,” aniya. “I mean it.” Tumingin siya sa asawa. “That’s what I want.”

“After all these years?” Parang labis itong nababaghan.

Tumango si Yelina. “After all these years.”

“We’ve been married for almost twenty years, Yelina. We have a daughter.”

“Who’s an adult now and who’s going away for college,” aniya, kalmado pa rin. Samantalang parang sasabog si Poetry. He looked angry and confused.

“I can’t understand why you’re acting like this,” anito.

“This is not a failure, Poetry. An almost nineteen-year marriage coming to an end is not in any way a failure. We have a great ma—partnership for nearly two decades. You’ve been a good dad and husband. But we are moving forward. We’re evolving. Things are changing. It’s time we—”

Hindi niya naituloy ang iba pang sasabihin dahil nilapitan siya ng asawa at mariing hinagkan ang kanyang mga labi. Sinubukan niyang kumawala pero hindi siya nito

hinayaan. Pumaikot sa kanya ang mga braso nito, ang isang kamay ay hinawakan ang likod ng ulo niya upang hindi siya gaanong makagalaw at makawala.

He urged her mouth to open. She did, hindi niya mapigilan ang sarili. She might have wanted to end their marriage, but his kiss could still melt her whole world away. Soon enough, she was kissing him back.

“Whoa!”

Mabilis na itinulak ni Yelina si Poetry nang marinig niya ang kanilang anak. Hindi nila namalayan na hindi na lang sila ang nasa loob ng kusina. Kunot na kunot ang noo ni Lennon habang nakatingin sa kanila. Parang gusto niyang mamula na hindi niya malaman.

“This is weird,” saad ni Lennon habang kunot pa rin ang noo. “I think this is the first time I’ve walked into the two of you kissing like that. You held hands but never really kissed in front of me.”

Nagpakaabala si Yelina sa mga pagkain.

“Your father is just being silly.”

“Are you trying to replace me already?”

“What are you talking about?” tanong niya.

“Are you trying to have another baby because I’m going away?”

Natawa nang malakas si Yelina. “No.”

“Why not? I mean, I don’t wanna think of you having sex, but you’re both still young. You can still get pregnant.”

Umiling-iling si Yelina habang natatawa pa rin. “I have decided long ago na magiging only child ka lang. You’re not getting a sibling. At least not from me.”

Halos wala sa loob na tumingin siya kay Poetry. Baka naman hindi pa huli ang lahat. Maaaring mabigyan pa ni Poetry ng kapatid si Lennon, hindi nga lang siya ang ina. Maybe Lennon could get stepsiblings.

Napatingin din sa kanya si Poetry, medyo masama ang tingin. Sinikap na lang niyang ngumiti.

“Breakfast,” sabi niya. “Let’s have breakfast.”

Nagpasya siya na sa labas na lang sila kakain na mag-anak. She needed to treasure moments like this. Matatagalang bago sila maging kompleto uli.

Bahagya niyang ipinag-aalala ang magiging epekto kay Lennon ng paghihiwalay nila ni Poetry, pero malaki na ang anak nila, may sarili nang pang-unawa. Confident siya na mauunawaan nito paglaon. Hindi magiging madali pero gusto niyang maniwala na magiging maayos ang lahat sa pamilya nila kahit na mapawalang-bisa ang kasal nila ni Poetry.

Habang kumakain ay napansin ni Yelina na patingin-tingin sa kanila ni Poetry ang anak nila. Parang may kung anong tumatakbo sa isipan nito.

“Talaga bang nawiwirduhan ka na makita kaming naghahalikan ng Daddy mo?” aniya.
“At least I didn’t walk into you having sex.”

Nalukot nang husto ang mukha nito. “Eww.”

“Yes, eww. Do not have sex,” nakangiti niyang sabi. Tumingin siya kay Poetry na tahimik lang.

“Yeah, right. But I’m also thinking na you were too young when you had me, Mom. My age now.”

“Uh-huh.”

“How did it happen? I mean, how did you meet? Parang hindi ko maalala if naikuwento n’yo na sa akin before. All I know is you were both in college. I guess you were boyfriends, and you were so into each other.”

“We met at a party,” sabi ni Yelina. “Tumugtog ang banda ng Dad mo. I am fairly sure I was there because of them. I got a crush on your dad. I’ve seen them before somewhere, hindi ko na gaanong maalala where. He’s also the typical popular guy at school. So I suppose he became aware of my existence at that party.”

Ngumisi si Lennon. “Guwapo at saka

nagbabanda kaya mo crush agad, Mom?”

Napangiti rin si Yelina. “I was just like any other girl. I was starting to be a party girl then, madalas sa galaan. I had fake IDs to enter bars and clubs. I had been coming to your dad’s gigs. Hindi naman ako stalker, pero I think malapit na. Then there’s this guy. Hindi ko na maalala ang pangalan niya. I think I danced with him once, ‘tapos nag-expect na siya. He called me a tease. I was inexperienced kahit na madalas ang night out ko kaya hindi totoo iyon. I didn’t send the wrong signal; he was seeing something that wasn’t there. He was drunk and he cornered me. I was so scared, I remember that. I didn’t know what to do. Kasi nga wala naman akong gaanong experience sa ganoon.”

“And Dad rescued you? Awww.”

Nakangiting tumango si Yelina. “Your dad rescued me. And at that point, hindi ko na lang siya crush, mahal ko na siya. I was so crazy in love with him. Then we hooked up

and my period didn't come."

"Yelina..." usal ni Poetry, nasa tinig nito na hindi nito gaanong nagustuhan ang naging paglalahad niya. Mahihimigan din ang babala.

"Oh," sabi ni Lennon. "Then you got married."

"I baby trapped your dad, sweetheart."

"Enough!" Poetry thundered.

Pareho silang napapitlag ni Lennon. Hindi nila inasahan ang marahas na reaksiyon mula kay Poetry. Mukhang galit ang kanyang asawa, at nakatuon sa kanya ang galit nito. Bihirang-bihira na magalit ito nang ganoon.

Inabot ni Lennon ang kamay ng ama. "Dad, it's okay. Nagbibiro lang si Mom. I know that's not what happened."

But that was exactly what happened.

Mukhang hindi pa rin makalma si Poetry.

Nagpatuloy si Lennon. "Parang biro-biro lang ni Mommy pero I'm sure she wants this to be a cautionary tale for me. She doesn't

want me to make the same mistakes she did when she was my age.”

“You’re not a mistake,” Poetry gritted out.

Napangiti si Lennon, banayad. “I know, Daddy. I know. I was the kid with the youngest and the prettiest parents in school. I’ve known you both had me at a very young age. The math isn’t complicated. But I never really believed I was a mistake or an accident. I’m not very sure how you managed that, honestly. I am a hashtag *blessing*.

“And I know you love each other. Siguro nagpakasal kayo dahil nabuntis si Mom, pero gusto kong isipin na napaaga lang. You wouldn’t last this long if baby trap ang nangyari. There’s always love and respect. Good partnership. There should be resentment and animosity. And you would’ve probably separated before I turned five. And I’d probably be a depressed and suicidal kid. A druggie. But I’m sunshine and mentally stable. That is because we have a happy

home.”

Nag-init ang mga mata ni Yelina, mabilis na nangilid ang mga luha. Maraming pagkakataon sa nakaraan na kumbinsido siya na hindi siya isang mabuting ina at napakarami niyang naging pagkakamali. Madalas niyang sabihin na hindi niya gustong matulad sa kanya ang anak. Hindi niya gustong matulad sa kanyang ina. She had worked so hard not to be like her mother.

But it was still very hard, and she was so terrified she was doing everything wrong as a mother. She was terrified Lennon would grow up with traumas and insecurities. The thought that her daughter might hate her kept her up at night.

Hearing the things Lennon had just said, it was such a relief to know she had been happy. She and Poetry raised a confident and secured young woman. Kind and sweet. Brave and tough.

“And I’m going away for college,” dagdag

ni Lennon sa masiglang tinig. “You’re basically getting your lives back. I know you’ve not fully enjoyed your twenties. I was probably the neediest kid. Ngayon, you can just be.”

Tumingin si Yelina kay Poetry. He didn’t look happy. But she was confident he would be eventually. Masyado lang itong nasanay sa setup nila at hndi pa nito naipoproseso ang lahat. Paglaon ay mababatid nito na tama siya.

“It’s never too late to enjoy life,” aniya.

“You haven’t been enjoying life before?” naiinis na sabi ni Poetry.

“It’s never too late to start again.”

Tumingin sa kanila ang kanilang anak. “Are you guys okay?”

“Your dad’s just being emotional kasi malapit ka nang umalis.”

Ipinagpasalamat niya na nanahimik na si Poetry.

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