

Rose

# cutie Pie

Written by BamBam

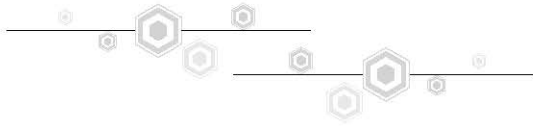
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English Translation 2022 by TULIP

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## Prologue



*Gilayn Wang* is engaged to Kuea Keerati, as their families have agreed. The Keerati family's lineage traced back to the noble house in the past, resulting in their possession of many properties, including the silk export business and Thai clothing brands.

As for the Wangs, their Chinese ancestor fled the war to Thailand by ship and worked at a silk shop the Keeratis owned. His diligence earned trust from the Keerati family, and they eventually promoted him to be the manager, taking charge of the business branches all over Thailand. One day, he wedded the daughter of the icehouse owner and resigned from the silk business to take over his wife's family business instead, branching out in Bangkok.

The betrothal between the Keeratis and the Wangs was formed, as Master Keerati still adored his former employee. Back when the Wangs suffered financially for deciding to run the import and export beverage business, they turned to the Keeratis to borrow tens of millions baht.

Master Keerati requested their offspring shall be wed, seeing as the Wangs had gotten a two-year-old son toddling in his mansion.

"Lian's physiognomy looks decent. Think of this money as an engagement agreement for my grandchild."

"But the young lady hasn't been married..."

Master Keerati had a daughter who was in a relationship with a promising ambassador. They had recently selected the auspicious date for their wedding ceremony next year.

"No worries. I will have one in the future. Lian would be a big boy by then. I shall entrust my grandchild in his care."

The two-year-old Lian, or Gilayn, couldn't grasp what the adults meant, yet he nodded as his name was mentioned.

"You are so kind to us I don't know how to pay you back."

"You lot are the only ones I can trust. My daughter will probably follow her husband to a foreign country, and our business is not thriving like it was back in the day. Times are changing. People don't wear silk anymore. The Keeratis may be left with nothing in the near future. Our family needs to rely on you when that time comes. Keep this money for my grandchild."

"Master, I can't accept that. We should make a written contract, making the Keeratis my official partner. And Lian will be married to your grandchild."

"Ha... If that's what you want."

After sealing the contract, The Wangs' business grew fast and became the 'Gilayn' beverage company. They imported carbonated drinks and started a brewery of their own, sending them to be the top business founders in society.

Meanwhile, several branches of the Keeratis' shop were

closed down until all that was left was the main branch in the mall in the old town of Bangkok. His precious little grandson was born during the downturn of the Keeratis' business.

Kuea Keerati, the pink baby, was cradled in the embrace of the wife of the promising ambassador stationed in Sweden. She had requested to bear her child in her homeland since the weather in Europe was unbearably freezing.

"Lian...look at him."

Kewalin Keerati was aware of the engagement agreement created by her father and the former manager, whom she trusted as much as her father did. She saw Lian as her own child.

The seven-year-old Gilayn Wang, or Lian, was a Chinese-Thai little boy with rather darker skin from his Thai mother's side. He pursed his lips defiantly, copying his father's solemn manner perfectly.

"He..."

His sharp eyes locked on the pink baby wrapped in a white cloth, only his face visible... He was as small as a newborn street kitten behind the brewery. His eyes were closed the same way, and his mouth was as tiny. The kitten was furrier, though. The baby looked softer, like a dough.

"His name is Kuea. Nu-Kuea<sup>1</sup>... Lian, please take care of him from now on."

"He must be a good boy to me."

Lian hated babies. His family's employees' children always whined annoyingly. Only weak people cry. Lian is strong. Lian

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<sup>1</sup> 'Nu' is a word used to address younger people.

doesn't cry. The baby must not cry as well. But he was so tiny...crying a little would be fine. But he'd better be quiet when Lian told him to. Don't be naughty.

"If you love him, I'm sure he'll be a good boy to you."

"I will take care of him."

I can raise a kitten. It should be fine to take care of Kuea as well. He's only a bit bigger than a kitty.

Gilayn and Kuea are an ideal match.

The twenty-year-old Kuea Keerati lives up to his noble lineage. They say, according to the family's will, the family possessions will be inherited to the heir of the same surname, so he uses his mother's last name. He is also the only son of a promising ambassador. He is well-mannered, polite, and loved by the elders. His voice is soft and sweet when exchanging words with his charming fiancé, as clear as a bell.

The twenty-seven-year-old Gilayn is as handsome as a Hong Kong actor. A faint smile is plastered on his lips. His sharp eyes land on the younger man with fondness, his big hand holding Kuea's. He walks a little ahead, careful with each step. He speaks rather bluntly, as he was raised in a Chinese family. However, his voice is always gentle as he talks to his younger fiancé.

When they are side by side, the older man and the younger one suit each other like nothing else. They say that after Kuea Keerati graduates, the two families will join houses. The Keeratis own several grand lands while the Wangs' business flourishes day by day.

The sweetest, most magnificent wedding in the country

will definitely be held in a few years... As if.

Kuea Keerati wants to cry, scream, and charge forward to shake the head of the tall man leaning against his desk, looking totally unbothered. Hia-Lian<sup>2</sup> right now is no different from a stranger.

"What do you mean?"

Ten points for his attempt to control his voice from trembling. Kuea keeps his tone soft and mellow, speaking politely to the older man as always. He should spit curses at him...but that is not considered well-mannered.

Kuea Keerati, the son of an ambassador, the perfect fiancé, will not lose his cool!

"I said it clearly. Why did you ask me again?"

"I don't understand."

"Don't understand or don't want to?"

He finally turns his attractive yet cold face to Kuea Keerati, his big hand grabbing a glass of fancy booze to sip, letting silence take over his office once more.

"Aren't we in love?"

"I think you misunderstand."

"But you promised to be with me forever."

"That is true."

Hia-Lian nods, not denying.

"You promised to propose to me."

"Yes, and I will."

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<sup>2</sup> 'Hia' is a word used by Chinese-Thai or Chinese people in Thailand to address another male older than them whom they are close to.

"But when I asked if you loved me..."

"When you said you wanted to be with me forever, I could accept it. When you asked if I would marry you, I was fine with that. But if you ask if I love you...I don't think I do."

"You..."

Tons of questions overflow in his mind. He is speechless by the way Hia-Lian shrugs as if it can't be helped. Why is he so mean?

"Being together and getting married have nothing to do with love... If they did, we wouldn't have been together this long. Please leave. I have work to do. I'll send someone to drive you home."

Yes... Kuea understands everything he said, every single word, every meaning he indicated. It all means he has never loved Kuea, that is all. His years-long efforts to be Hia-Lian's lover...appear futile.

"It's all right. I can go home by myself."

"It's late. Aunt Kew would tell me off."

"Mother is in Austria. She won't find out."

"Don't act out."

"I'm not acting out. I don't know how to do that. But I have realized that I shouldn't bother you anymore. I've wasted your time all these years. Plus, I'm a man. It's no big deal to take myself home. About the engagement, I will talk to my mother. Is that all? I'll take my leave now."

"Nu-Kuea, don't make me angry."

"How strange. Every action of mine suddenly irritates you. You even get mad just because I want to go home by myself."

Kuea Keerati, to his surprise, still can paste on a smile. He smiles as if Hia-Lian's exasperated expression is fake, and his burning glare is as sweet as honey in May... Ha.

"About the engagement, I will deal with it. No need to break it off. We can just live separately."

"You're not the only one in this arrangement. It's our matter. Like it or not, I have the right to deal with it as well. I wish to break off the engagement."

He scoffs, "You're something else, Nu-Kuea."

Hia-Lian is furious, a rare occasion. But Kuea is just as infuriated, so much that he shakes and has to dig his nails into his skin to suppress his disappointment and sorrow... Kuea won't lose to him whatsoever!

"Prepare a good excuse to answer why I would like the engagement canceled."

"What's so hard about it? I can just tell them I want to marry a person, not a doll."

Kuea is well aware that Hia-Lian is brusque man. He always scolds his employees, but he has never once sniped at Kuea this way. So this is Gilayn Wang's true colors?!

"Am I that sweet in your eyes?"

"Annabelle doll."

A wicked smirk on Hia-Lian's face only adds fuel to the fire. Kuea swears that if he held something in his hand, it would land on Hia-Lian's head for sure. But Kuea Keerati is Kuea Keerati. He values his pride more than anything else.

"I don't want to talk to you anymore. I'll excuse myself. Goodbye."

The tall and slim figure spins and steps away, and the man behind him shouts over his head.

"Whoever's out there, drive Kuea home. And you better not fear ghosts."

You're not a fiancé. You're a fucker! Hia-Lian, you son of a bitch!

# Chapter 1



## Kuea Keerati

*Kuea Keerati* has been engaged to Gilayn Wang ever since the day he was born.

Hia-Lian was there in every stage of his life. Since the two families had a good relationship, it was typical for them to visit each other. Kuea's father, the ambassador, routinely moved from a country to another to work. Kuea studied at an old boarding school in England, so he only had time to see Hia-Lian during the school break, when he returned to Thailand. When Kuea was ready for college, the elders believed it was an excellent opportunity for Kuea and Hia-Lian to learn more about each other. Hia-Lian had no problem with the idea, and Kuea had always waited for that. He moved back to Thailand permanently in delight.

Hia-Lian is seven years older than him. Kuea's impression of him was of a hero. Hia-Lian played with him. Hia-Lian taught him to ride a bike. Hia-Lian helped him with homework. Hia-Lian picked him up at school. Hia-Lian took him to places. Everyone said Hia-Lian was an incredible fiancé, that Hia-Lian was handsome, that Hia-Lian was the famous young heir to a successful

business, that Kuea had an enviable life because Gilayn's kindness belonged to him.

Thinking the same, Kuea attempted to do everything to make Hia-Lian love him. He wanted to be his good boy. He wanted to be someone suitable. He wished no one would say that Hia-Lian was unlucky to be engaged to him.

We would be an ideal match, the greatest couple, the perfect life partners!

Even so, the steps and process to become Hia-Lian's suitable partner were no easy task. Gilayn Wang is not a sweet guy. He is cranky, despises rejection, and is a workaholic. Work is his priority. When Hia-Lian was a fire, Kuea had to be water, though sometimes the water boiled and steamed like a heating kettle.

To be with Hia-Lian, he needed to act like a female lead in a soap opera, not a modern play where the lead is a working woman. It had to be a period drama where the female lead is well-behaved and graceful.

The person with those traits in this day and age is his mother. Lady Kewalin Keerati is a small woman, gentle, courteous, having all feminine charms.

Even though he is his mother's son, Kuea lacks an impressive appearance. Kuea possesses no adorable features. If he did, they would have left comments on the Cute Boy page that Kuea was handsome, had a killer smile, and looked warm-hearted. Girls would have taken interested in him. Kuea hoped Hia-Lian wouldn't care much about to his college life.

Moreover, Kuea is five-foot-seven, not a cute, small man to be cherished. He is just like other men these days, with long legs and

a tall figure. Fortunately, it's not that much of a problem since Hia-Lian is six feet tall and muscular from all the exercises. Even if Kuea were taller, he would look small comparing to Hia-Lian.

Next, there seems to be a misunderstanding that Kuea Keerati is a handy person like Lady Kewalin. The ambassador's wife is the head of the Ambassadors' Wives Club, with numerous women of the upper class as the members. His mother always plays a major role in managing booths in religious ceremonies and charity events, such as the Red Cross Fair.

Kuea usually gives her a hand. But...helping his mother and doing it by himself are two different things! And he only does it for his image. Truthfully, Kuea Keerati is hot-headed and despises handiwork. His mother tried to teach him countless times and gave up, accepting the fact that her son could never pull it off. All the desserts he gave Hia-Lian were made by his mother. He remembers each handicraft taught by her, but never masters it. Kuea studied abroad, so nobody spent time with him enough to know this is not his lifestyle!

This matter is not that much of a problem as well. Hia-Lian never shows the desire to taste his food or receive handmade scarfs from his lover. Hia-Lian never seems interested despite Kuea giving him presents on every occasion. His mother has been making gifts for Hia-Lian out of habit even before Kuea was born. The difference is now Kuea is the one to deliver them. That's why Hia-Lian is not particularly excited about it... to Kuea's relief.

Third, Kuea Keerati dresses smart and behaves well as the descendant of the noble family and the son of the ambassador. He wears a casual attire to resemble his father like a British man,

with a light-color short shirt under a short-sleeve vest, putting on either a necktie or a bow tie, along with trousers and leather shoes. He intentionally chooses cozy and rather girly tones to contrast with Hia-Lian's regular dark suits. The distinctness makes him look like his cute fiancé in others' eyes.

The truth is, Kuea Keerati loathes these clothes! Why wearing several layers in this heat? It doesn't suit the weather in Thailand at all. Besides, the light-color shades are inconvenient as they are easily stained. When he has classes, Kuea Keerati prefers wearing a navy workshop shirt, a pair of jeans, and sneakers, which Hia-Lian believes is the uniform of engineering students. After all, Kuea Keerati, the perfect fiancé, majors in Computer Engineering, studying in a clean, air-conditioned room... As if.

Kuea Keerati is an automotive engineering student, basically a mechanic, but he hides it from Hia-Lian. Kuea never meets up with Hia-Lian on the days he has projects because his face would be a mess, smeared with soot, oil, and many other things.

Hia-Lian wouldn't be able to accept it if he found Kuea lying on a creeper sliding under a car with his right hand holding a screwdriver, a wrench between his lips, and a big nail tucked behind his ear.

Hia-Lian must not find out, no matter what!

In the end, his efforts are useless! Success is out of reach!

Even though he tried to be the perfect fiancé that everyone said Hia-Lian was the luckiest man in the world, that Hia-Lian would find no one as good as him. He was getting ahead of himself. He never expected that Hia-Lian would say he didn't love him.

What the hell was I trying for?! You motherfucker!

Kuea Keerati is a complete mess. His eyes hurt from all the crying. Gone is Hia-Lian's most adorable Nu-Kuea since he has arrived at the Keerati Mansion in the old town. He waited for a while after Hia-Lian's car disappeared out of sight, then he called for a Grab taxi to head to the secret house. The secret house...is the place Kuea actually lives in. Hia-Lian has no idea that his Nu-Kuea never lives in the Keerati Mansion.

A three-story townhouse, the property of his father's family, is hidden near the BTS Silom station. The area is a tourist attraction as it's close to the Chao Phraya River and Asiatique. You can view the Ferris wheel closely from the rooftop.

The house is located deep in the alley that only bikes can pass through, and that's not a problem. Kuea Keerati owns a super bike worth more than a million baht. He calls his precious possession Chi Lin, which means Gilayn in Chinese. He loved Hia-Lian so much that he named his beloved baby after him!

"Kuea, calm down."

Too distressed to be alone and in need of venting, Kuea contacted Khon Diaw who came straight over after hearing his voice.

"He doesn't love me. Not at all."

"He could have been stressed and said those words unintentionally. It's Hia-Lian we're talking about."

Khon Diaw is Kuea Keerati's one and only best friend, who knows about his effort and immense affection for Hia-Lian.

When Kuea attended the old boarding school in England, Khon Diaw was also sent there. These two Thai boys became best friends and moved back to study in a college in Thailand for different reasons.

Kuea needed to get ready to wed Gilayn Wang while Khon Diaw had family issues.

"Even when he was mad, he never said he didn't love me. But I forgot that when he wasn't angry, he never said he loved me as well..."

Kuea chugs down his booze. He is a heavyweight, having tried all kinds of liquors and more in the teenage parties abroad. It's been a while since he drank after returning to Thailand. The first glass left a bitter taste in his throat, but he got into it in the next few glasses.

"Hia-Lian won't come back to you even if you're drunk. Cut it out."

"Even when I want to be drunk, I have to drink at home because I don't want him to see. Diaw, how have I endured this? I grew up with him. He's my everything. Everything. He even flew to Norway to visit me. It was during my school break. I had to stay in Norway that year because I was sick. Did I get ahead of myself? He went there because Uncle Wang told him to, right? He was forced."

"Kuea, get some sleep. Let's talk after you wake up and your mind is clear. Hia-Lian might try to make up with you tomorrow."

"He won't. He's never done it. I almost forgot why I tried so hard. If I make one mistake and upset him, he will leave me. He's left me, Diaw. He won't come back."

Khon Diaw is at a loss for how to console his friend. Hia-Lian... Gilayn Wang is well-known for his intimidation. Among the high-class families' heirs, he is one of the most formidable bunch. Maybe it's the fact that the Wangs run a booze business that makes Hia-Lian

appear similar to a mafia in real life.

"Hey, what are you going to do now?"

"I'll break off the engagement. I've had enough. I won't fucking take it anymore. This is fucking exhausting."

"But you said Hia-Lian wouldn't agree to that. Why don't you calm down first and try to talk to him later?"

"It's none of my business. If he wants to get married so much, he can go and marry a bridge pillar, an electric pole, a trash can in Bangkok, or anything, whatever he wants. I'm moving on!"

"You think you can beat him? Seriously, Hia-Lian is super scary, just like Hia-Yi, that bastard. These guys are fucking trash. They're power-crazed and foul-mouthed."

Khon Diaw sighs, feeling sorry for his dear friend. Why wouldn't he know how much Kuea loves Hia-Lian? How vicious of him to have been keeping Kuea's hopes up.

Kuea hides everything from Hia-Lian, except one thing that he can't possibly cover, his rough hands, callused from the pressure just like the hands of a laborer. Kuea Keerati has been obsessed with playing drums since when he was a student. He would play until his fingers bled, and even formed a school band back then. He also has a YouTube channel showcasing his song covers, with hundreds of thousands of subscribers. In the videos, he neither speaks nor greets, a black mask covering half of his face. He wears a black long-sleeve shirt and pants, with a cap shielding his head and eyes. He might not be famous in Thailand, but he received several offers to make music in Europe and even got contacted for interviews. He turned them all down, though, to keep his identity a secret. Moreover, he outfitted his beloved superbike all by himself.

The only thing left to do is race it, the activity he turns his back on for Hia-Lian.

"I would oblige if I were still his Nu-Kuea. But I've come to my senses. Nu-Kuea is gone forever! Hand me the scissors."

"Scissors? Hey, you can't kill yourself. Move on if you want, but don't die."

"I'm not ending my life. Will you cut my hair? My vision blurs."

"Cut your hair? You want to cut your hair?"

"Yeah, a buzz cut. I've always wanted to try it, but I was afraid Hia-Lian would freak out. But now, I don't care if he freaks the fuck out. This is my hair. I can do whatever I want with it. I am Thai, and that means I'm a free person. I will no longer be his slave! I will cut my hair to my heart's content!"

Kuea is totally intoxicated. Gaping, Khon Diaw lunges forward to catch the glass slipping off his friend's grip.

"Kuea, Kuea. Shit, you're knocked out. Let's go to the barbershop tomorrow to get a haircut. I don't know how to do it. And you might prefer other hairstyles when you're sober."

Khon Diaw is a little smaller than Kuea, so he can't drag him to the couch. He decides to fetch a blanket and a pillow from upstairs instead. There is nothing with the 'Nu-Kuea' vibe in this townhouse.

The secret house is a raw concrete building, decorated in black and gray tones, with a few pieces of furniture. On the first floor, where they are right now, besides the super bike, there is a leather couch and a built-in television, with a stereo blasting music. A studio for recording drum videos occupies the second floor, with two pricy sets of drums imported from Europe placed on the opposite corners.

The third floor is the bedroom, and the rooftop serving as a resting area. It's a man's house. A rich man's house.

The only thing with 'Nu-Kuea'-ness is the photo frames lining on the walls, capturing each moment Hia-Lian and Kuea shared. Nu-Kuea in those frames is the descendant of the noble family, a courteous man with a shy smile in a fancy suit, completely different from Kuea in an oil-stained shirt carrying tools and tucking screws and nails behind his ears. He would look up at these pictures while upgrading his superbike.

*'I will put my wedding photo here so Chi Lin can see how handsome his daddy is.'*

What a screwy fella. His superbike's daddy is a human. Plus, the daddy in question is not even aware of his one-million-worth son's existence, the son frequently modified by his mommy.

However, Khon Diaw 's hunch is screaming that his dear friend could never shake Hia-Lian away. If Hia-Lian wished to cancel the wedding, he wouldn't have been by Kuea's side until now. He wouldn't have worn the expensive engagement ring on his left ring finger. He wouldn't have taken Kuea on a date every Friday.

Gilayn Wang always has plans.

## Chapter 2



# Kirin

*Kuea Keerati*, the heir of the Keerati family, the noble house in the past, and the son of the ambassador, is smoking on the rooftop, his eyes locked on the Ferris wheel of Asiatique. His slender fingers position the cigarette over his lips, gray smoke floating up in the morning sky. His short hair flutters in the breeze.

Despite getting wasted last night, he woke up early out of habit since he always gave Hia-Lian wake-up calls. The life of the perfect couple was so blissful. Hia-Lian was an ideal boyfriend. They would have morning and night calls and say goodnight before going to bed. Even some nights when Hia-Lian had to manage things at his pub, he would call Kuea from the office over there. Love blinded Kuea that he failed to recognize the emptiness in those actions. Hia-Lian was actually annoyed and simply completed his role.

The Pentagon, the fancy pub in Ekkamai-Thonglor, has been open for business for two years. Hia-Lian, besides being the vice president of his father's company, started running a nightclub since the Gilayn beverages include liquors, anyway.

Hia-Lian's pub is a hot place for the tycoons, businessmen, and celebrities in the country. None of them have ever visited the Pentagon, except for Kuea Keerati. Hia-Lian forbade him to come to the pub because 'Nu-Kuea hadn't reached' twenty yet.

Hia-Lian never understood his uneasiness. His twenty-seven-year-old charming boyfriend with a stable career and excellent reputation in society works at a nightclub full of famous people having fun. Celebrities and models gather there. How could he be sure that Hia-Lian didn't cheat on him?

"Ha..."

The heartbreak from the love of his life can't heal overnight. Kuea Keerati can't help but skip classes, and he doesn't have the heart to take himself anywhere. He has even started smoking again after quitting it for a year. Before, he was afraid Hia-Lian would hate the smell.

Hia-Lian inspired him to do so many things throughout his life. Kuea loved him dearly and did everything for him. Was he wrong for loving Hia-Lian so much and trying to be a good person for him for all this time?

He has finally understood the saying... *Love is not the reward for being good.*

Kuea flicks the burnt ash into the ashtray, letting tears trickle down his cheeks. He wants to stop crying, but he can't right now. He will drown himself in sadness and remember this feeling... so he won't bring himself back to this state.

Kuea Keerati will never be hurt by Gilayn Wang again!

Kuea looks at his reflection in the mirror and wishes to thank his best friend for not shaving his head. After all, he carries his social status on his shoulders. It can't be helped. He's the son of the High Lady and the ambassador. His mother wouldn't be able to accept it if her son shaved his head. He also has social parties of the upper class to attend, and the relatives and elders see him as 'Nu-Kuea'.

The most he can do is dye his hair...to be light-brown, the way he has never tried before. The barber trims the hair behind his ears up in a curve and clips his bangs out a little. It's a fashionable hairstyle.

"Is this all right?"

"Yes, I like my looks this way."

"You look like a Korean idol. I've never thought you would like a makeover. Whenever you came here with Mr. Lian, you always asked for the same hairstyle."

The barber's words bring a smile to Kuea's face. He has no intention of correcting their relationship status. They are still engaged, and the process of calling off the engagement won't be easy since Hia-Lian didn't agree to it. Hia-Lian doesn't hold him back out of love. He just needs this status to prevent the elders from meddling with his personal stuff. Kuea has made up his mind to consider it. He might not break off the engagement and uses the status of Hia-Lian's fiancé to live however he desires, so he can do all the things he has never done.

He drops his beautiful eyes to the engagement ring on his left ring finger. The real silver three-diamond ring was gifted to him when he was eighteen. He, a student from England, burst into tears

when Hia-Lian...simply gave it to him during a meal in the Keerati Mansion. No surprise, no sweet words. Hia-Lian was being Hia-Lian, and Kuea was so naïve that he made up an excuse for Hia-Lian's indifferent manner.

He was good at fooling himself.

"Hey."

"Hey, Jay."

The next destination is a nightclub in the city, located in the same area as Hia-Lian's Pentagon. The nightclub is on the rooftop of a small building, with an outdoor space to chill out and an indoor zone for customers who enjoy indie rock music. Kuea plays drums here.

Gemini Miler is a British-Spanish owner of this nightclub. He couldn't believe that a man from the other side of the world would recognize a mysterious drummer on YouTube. Kuea played drums in place of his acquainted musician once, and Jay immediately charged towards him.

*"I know you're Kirin, the masked drummer on YouTube. I remember your techniques and the way you spin the drumsticks. I've watched your videos over a million times for years. Don't deny it. What the fuck?! You're just an innocent-looking Thai man!"*

Kuea named his channel 'Kirin'... The Japanese version of 'Gilayn' is easier to pronounce for foreigners. Way easier than Gilayn or Chi Lin. He even named his secret channel after Hia-Lian... Why was he so head over heels?

"Let me take a nap."

"You came here at one in the afternoon? What's wrong? And

what's with the color of your hair? It doesn't suit your 'good boy' image."

Jay wiggles his eyebrow cheekily behind the counter bar. Ignoring his boss and friend of different ages, Kuea flops down on the black leather couch in front of the stage, his legs crossed over the armrest, pointing his leather ankle shoes.

"Why don't you answer my questions, kid?"

"Shut up!"

He flips his boss off and shuts his eyes. Jay keeps yammering until Kuea takes off his leather jacket to cover his face, leaving on the oversized sleeveless white shirt.

This is another one of his precious hiding places where Kuea can be himself. There's no way Hia-Lian knows about this place because it's totally different from his Pentagon. It can't even be counted as his competitor.

"Kid, you've slept for over an hour. Get up and sweep the floor."

The smell of tobacco hits close, making Kuea jump away. Jay is a thirty-five-year-old man whose lifestyle doesn't suit his age. He prefers tobacco from the countries to cigarettes and loves illicit rum despite owning a nightclub.

"Do you have a cigarette?"

"Thought you quitted."

"I can start again."

"The second time will be harder than the first... So is love."

Kuea shakes his head at those gleeful light-blue eyes. Jay is a charming man, but Kuea doesn't think of him in that way. Jay resembles a bird flying aimlessly and never settling on any

branches too long. He comes and he goes, unlike Hia-Lian... Hia-Lian is stable.

A student in a boarding school far from home was exceptionally lonely, so Hia-Lian secured absolute victory. He won over everything, while Kuea...lost out of weakness.

"A single man at your age knows anything about love? Where's my cigarette?"

"I only have tobacco. Wanna try? It's incredible."

"Ha... Very well. But don't add weeds. I don't smoke cannabis."

Jay chuckles. "I don't have that kind of thing. Even if I do, I won't let you have it. I don't share such good stuff, you know."

Kuea Keerati relaxes with the smoke of tobacco. Smoking again after quitting ignites the sweet taste of longing in him. It's as if the clouds of smoke are bellowing, accusing him of neglecting them. Why did he quit? For whom? What came of it? It rewarded him with nothing in the end.

"Holy hell, you look like a dead man after a roll of tobacco. Let me guess. A heartbreak?"

"Yeah... Is it that obvious?"

"Boys, your age agonize over a few things. What happened? Did that Hong Kong dude dump you? Good riddance. He looks like a jerk."

"Have you ever stopped calling someone a jerk for once in your life? Hia-Lian is nice in his own way."

"He is, but you're not."

Kuea seizes the broom Jay throws his way. His foreign face gestures to him to starting cleaning. Although it's not his job, he

has to work to pay for the tobacco.

"Only the monks are nicer than me."

"Who says monks are nice? Have you asked the dude if he fancies monks?"

"Is it so bad to be a nice person?"

"Nice people are unpleasant. Think about it. Who would cuddle a monk while watching TV? Who would take a monk on a date? Who would take a monk to drink or have a meal? Who..."

"Stop it, or you'll rot in hell. What's with those sceneries?"

"See? Monks are unapproachable. Besides, you've been acting like a flawless boy. In this world, perfection has no dimensions. It's not interesting. It belongs on the sacred shelf. To him, you are boring."

"Don't think for him. I asked him all the time if he liked this or that, and he said he did. When he didn't like it, he'd say so. Who would behave like a monk all the time?"

"Did he ever kiss you?"

"W... What?!"

"Did you guys fuck?"

"What the hell is that question?!"

Kuea Keerati's face heats up. Even Khon Diaw has never brought up such personal topics. And yet, Jay demands all the details: Did you try doggy style? Stand and carry? What about that position? And that position? Kuea has to smack him with the broom to shut him up.

"Kid, these questions are important. That dude is a grownup, not a kindergartener. Men like us have to release sexual tension by masturbation or sex with partners. If he doesn't do it with you..."

then being a monk is not a good idea. He doesn't want to touch you. To put it simply, he has no desire to make you his wife. You're just a displayed doll. No one in his right mind would be turned on by a doll unless it's a sex doll."

The word 'doll' stops Kuea Keerati short... When Jay mentions a doll, does he mean it the same way Hia-Lian did...? Hia-Lian wants to marry a person, not a doll.

"How will it fix anything? He doesn't love me."

"Don't repeat your mistake when you find someone new. Just be yourself. You only have one life. Don't tie it down with anyone. Stop being a doll. It's no good being nice. Be a jerk. Trust me. It's fun."

"I can't find someone new right now. I haven't broken off the engagement."

"Why can't you? You think that dude never hooked up with someone else?"

Kuea has only one answer... There's no way Hia-Lian never cheated on him. He can't deny it now that he thinks about it. Hia-Lian has never kissed him or stepped up his game. Kuea is too boring for him to make a move. Besides, Hia-Lian is at his prime age. He's dreamy and has a stable job. He's also good-looking and rich. Why would Hia-Lian save his body for Kuea when he doesn't love him?

"Since I can't fix anything, should I just be a shitty fiancé?"

"Be that and then what?"

"I'll drive him crazy to the point he completely loses it. I'll lash out at his secret lovers and insist on marrying him, and then I'll bail on the wedding day. He'll be so humiliated that he wishes to

bury himself. And I'll do a five-minute-long presentation about how trashy he is. It's gonna be a shock!"

"For what?"

"To make him pay. I've wasted twenty years of my life for him. I can't let him fulfill his desires so easily. He should've told me about his feelings in the first place. Why did he hide it?"

"What if the result is not as satisfying as you expected? What if you still can't get over him? What if you two end up being strangers forever, not even acquaintances? It's a lose-lose situation."

"I don't care. If I burn, he burns with me."

"You sure?"

"At this point, I don't want to fucking have anything to do with him."

It's just a pleasure game before we become strangers. Well, we better off hate each other. That way, we won't have to keep our masks on for the rest of our lives as if nothing has ever happened. He won't have to see Hia-Lian settle with someone else or love someone new.

"Ha... Why the fuck are you crying again, kid? You came up with such a vicious plan when you are just a crybaby. Come on, hit the drums as hard as you like tonight until you break the sticks and your hands hurt. Then I'll give you free booze."

"Hic... Fucking sucks."

Jay rests his hand on Kuea's soft brown hair and pulls him into a hug. They've known each other for over a year, and he's been listening to Kuea's naïve love story for more than enough. Despite everything, Kuea's sparkly, lively eyes were filled with happiness. He was happy even though he had never been himself.

Jay never understands this kid's peculiar relationship with his fiancé. Gilayn Wang is famous among nightclub founders for the Pentagon's outstanding success.

Gilayn Wang and Kuea Keerati's relationship is no secret to anyone. The wealthy man and his fiancé from the noble family. Even Gemini, who's not interested in this kind of stuff, heard about them. He even unintentionally hired the said fiancé from the noble family to work at his nightclub.

Jay has one question he will never ask this kid. He's an outsider. He shouldn't meddle with someone else's business. The question is...

Does anyone know Gilayn Wang has frequented this place for five years? Even before Kuea came back from England, and of course...before he opened the Pentagon.

Who would have thought that the owner of that famous pub would be into indie rock music? Before Jay recognized the complication in their relationship, before he discovered the identity of his regular customer, and before he knew the last name of the mysterious drummer, the situation...had already gotten out of hand. It couldn't be helped. It's his motto not to put his nose into people's business. How was he supposed to know?

Moreover, Gilayn Wang comes here to watch this kid play drums every night!

## Chapter 3

# Gilayn Wang

*Kuea Keerati* gets wasted again. The live music was over after he broke two sets of drumsticks. The singer and other musicians have gone home, but Kuea remains here. Gemini gives him free drinks as promised, ordering his workers to bring all the liquors out. Kuea is so drunk he can't see clearly. He probably gets drunk faster because it's already the second night. Pour the drinks and he'll chug it all down. Jay's words become indecipherable, and Kuea laughs without knowing what's so funny. Suddenly, a man steps towards their table when he can no longer sit up straight. Before his head knocks on the table, a hand slips under his chin and puts his head against someone's body. Who the hell?

"Go home with me."

Who is this? Is it Hia-Lian? Is it Hia-Lian, that son of a bitch?

"Take the kid away. Go home. Shoo!"

Jay wants him to leave with Hia-Lian? Wait, he won't go. He's not drunk yet.

"I'm not leaving. Who the hell are you? Don't touch me. I don't like it."

"Don't act out, Nu-Kuea. Get up!"

"Are you my husband to order me like that? Let go of me. Jay, give me another glass."

"That's enough, or you'll hit your head and drop-dead in my club. Go with your Lian. Hurry. I'm closing."

But he's not drunk. Why is Jay chasing him away? He said he'd get him drunk. Why did he lie? Why is everyone a liar? Someone keeps pulling him he gets annoyed and finally relents, following that person. Kuea doesn't even know who it is. The lights in the nightclub are too bright, and his legs give before they reach the elevator.

"Kuea!"

"Hia... Hia-Lian?"

Why is Hia-Lian here? That's impossible. Hia-Lian is supporting him. Part of his heart says the man in front of him is Hia-Lian, but his brain opposes it. Hia-Lian wouldn't behave this way. Kuea tries to pull himself together and squint at that him... No, this is not Hia-Lian.

This man doesn't look like Hia-Lian. Hia-Lian always wears a suit, his hair slicked back like a Hong Kong mafia, his expression intimidating. This man also has that expression, but his hair is messy. He wears a graphic shirt, a pair of black ripped jeans, and ankle shoes, with, more importantly, light stubble on his chin. No... This is not Hia-Lian. Hia-Lian would never forget to shave. He's just a man shockingly resembling Hia-Lian.

"Fake Hia-Lian, let me go. I'm not going with you."

"Stand still, Nu-Kuea. Don't push me."

Kuea sobs, "Don't call me Nu-Kuea. Hia-Lian is the only one

who can call me like that."

Hia-Lian often tells him to choose his friends carefully since Kuea Keerati comes from a wealthy family and has a well-off fiancé. People with ill intentions might approach him for money. Hia-Lian always says this kind of people is everywhere and he needs to put his guard up. Don't trust sweet talkers. Why would they shower us with sweet words when they're not even close? And this person even called him Nu-Kuea. This won't do. It's not right. He's a bad person.

"How should I call you, then?"

"Just Kuea, or...moron, idiot, son of a bitch, anything, but not Nu-Kuea."

"Oh?"

He smiles. Fake Hia-Lian's smile is pretty charming. Hia-Lian has never smiled at him like this. But this man's smile won't shake his heart. Hia-Lian is the one for him. Even though Hia-Lian doesn't love him, this is still unacceptable. No, stop smiling.

"Don't smile."

"You don't like it when I smile?"

"Yeah... I'll fall for you. Quit flirting."

"You don't want to fall for Hia-Lian?"

"No, I don't want Hia-Lian. I'm sick of Hia-Lian. Hia-Lian is a piece of shit. Don't flirt with me."

"But I want to flirt with Nu-Kuea."

"No. Stop it. I said, quit flirting. Ugh, Hia-Lian is the only one I love. I'm going home. Let go."

"I'll give you a lift."

"No. I'll go home by myself. Just let go of me already. I'll call

Grab."

"It's dangerous to go alone."

"It's safer than going with you, bastard."

"How rude, Nu-Kuea. You're acting out."

"You're so hard to please. If you want a nice person, then leave! Why are you hugging me? I told you to let go. Don't you understand? You crackhead! Where? Grab? Grab, Grab!"

Kuea fumbles in his pocket to get his phone, having no idea where it is. Before he can look for it properly, Fake Hia-Lian drags him into the elevator together. In this small space, Kuea smells the cigarette and familiar scent of perfume... What a high-quality counterfeit! Very detailed!

"Call Grab after we get down."

"Why do you look like Hia-Lian so much? Are you trying to deceive me?"

"Can I?"

"No, Hia-Lian has already deceived me. Go find someone else."

He loses the strength to struggle. Kuea Keerati's head awfully hurts that he doesn't want to think. Jay's mysterious booze and herbal liquors churn in his stomach, making him nauseous. The unfamiliar rolls of tobacco only drive him to lose his consciousness faster. It's been years since he got this drunk. He was in England back then... Kuea Keerati has been a good boy for two years.

"Please get on, sir."

A shiny black car pulls over in front of the building. Why is the driver also a high-quality counterfeit? He looks just like

Hia-Lian's driver. Kuea asks Fake Hia-Lian and receives no answer. When he shifts, Fake Hia-Lian presses his head on his shoulder... Um... Hia-Lian's smell.

"Where's his superbike?"

"Young Master didn't bring it, sir."

"Okay."

Out of the elevator and now in the car. The chilly air conditioner puts Kuea Keerati in a sleepy state, but the alcohol in his body burns up, preventing him from sleeping. He starts mumbling gibberish.

He simply says anything to hear the voice of the man whose shoulder he's leaning on. This person is similar to Hia-Lian... Hia-Lian when he's kind, the kind Hia-Lian he knows.

"Hey..."

"Hmm...?"

"Your hand's warm."

"No. Your hand is freezing. Are you cold?"

"No... You have a ring. Looks like Hia-Lian's."

Fake Hia-Lian also wears an engagement ring on his left ring finger. If he's here to deceive him, then he's successfully done it. Fake Hia-Lian is about to get everything Kuea Keerati has... because Kuea loves the way his warm hand clasp around his. He only has his wallet, but this person can take it. Take his credit card, ID card, student card, BTS Skytrain card, ATM card, and driver's license. The five-hundred cash as well. Take them all.

"What are you doing? Why are you opening your wallet?"

"I'll buy you. Take this."

"Five hundred? I'm only worth five hundred baht?" That man chuckles.

"What's so funny? Here's my credit card. This is my ATM card. You can take it. I'm rich. Use it to withdraw money. Is it not enough?"

"No. I want your house key."

This man is greedier than Hia-Lian. Hia-Lian never asks for a single cent, but this one declines five hundred baht because he wants the house. He's going to make Kuea broke now that he has fallen into his trap.

"I don't have a key. My house uses a digital system. You need a passcode."

"What's the passcode?"

"Hia-Lian's ID number."

He smiles again. Why? It's safe to use Hia-Lian's ID number. Thirteen digits. Thieves can never guess it right, and the alarm will go off after three mistakes. Anyway, this man smiles a lot. His lips are also beautiful. Fake Hia-Lian is the pastel version of Hia-Lian.

"Have you ever wanted to kiss me, Hia?"

"Kiss?"

"Have you ever wanted to hold me?"

"Nu-Kuea..."

"Can you not cheat on me...? Please only love me. If you want to kiss, kiss me. If you want to hold someone, hold me. Everything your secret lovers can do, I can do it too... Just love me a bit, will you? Just a little bit...will do. I want you to love me. I'm a good boy. I will marry you. Hic... I will marry you! I'll punch all your lovers."

Kuea Keerati cries again, so hard his shoulders heave. When will he stop hurting? Why is this painful time so torturing? Why can't it end in a single day? It should disappear after a good sleep. Why does it last so long?

"I've never had anyone else."

Grief wipes away one's common sense. Kuea believes this stranger's lie belongs to Hia-Lian... Darkness clouds his vision, which is good. This way, Kuea can fool himself that this man is Hia-Lian, that Hia-Lian has never had anyone else. It would be nice if Real Hia-Lian made him happy like this.

His heart beats too fast. Kuea feels defeated and weak in the warm embrace around his back. The man's nose touches his forehead and slowly moves down his cheek. And then, his first kiss is stolen.

Kuea never kissed... This kiss turns his body into a feather. The man's lips nibble Kuea's, leaving the scent of cigarette and fancy liquor on the tip of his tongue. Kuea clutches the man shirt, not knowing what to do with his hands.

The tiny bit of his consciousness tells Kuea to push this man away. He's a stranger. Things have gotten too far. Kuea wants to protest and lash at him, but the kiss seals his lips again. Drowsiness washes over him like waves crashing into the sand, and his kiss feels like a windstorm.

"Hia..."

His hoarse voice slips out once the man withdraws the selfish kiss, lingering close. His warm breath hits Kuea's cheek, his teeth gritted, as loud as his heavy breathing.

Kuea raises his slender hand to touch the man's beautiful

face, running his fingers along the curve of his eyebrow, down to his soft, wet lips. Every part looks exactly like Gilayn Wang.

Kuea Keerati inadvertently falls for a stranger who looks like his fiancé.

Kuea's lips are all swollen and numb from the man's kiss, the demanding one. He's kissed Kuea from Thong Lor to Bang Rak. The car stops at the main street since it can't go into the narrow alley. Kuea's mind is unorganized, unable to piece things together. All he knows is this fellow asked him where he lived... then he kissed him, not letting him answer. Kuea fumbled for his phone, his hands shaking so hard that the man snatched his phone away.

"The address on Grab? Home?"

Kuea pinned the location of the secret house as 'Home'. Before he could explain, Fake Hia-Lian pressed Kuea's finger on the scanner and tossed his phone to the driver. Then he kissed him again. His warm hands touched so many places, draining Kuea's energy. That man was good at kissing, and he kissed him a lot. Kuea was tired.

"Nu-Kuea, we're here."

Now that he's slightly come to his senses, he feels ashamed for having committed something crazy. Kuea Keerati, the son of the High Lady and the ambassador, the descendant of the noble family, kissed a stranger. How shameful. Good thing the dim streetlights refract on the building, so Kuea can only see the man's chin. If he squints, he will see his face clearly. But Kuea has no desire to know who this man is. Things have already

gone too far.

"I... I don't want to know you."

The man pauses before nodding, followed by a soft scoff. He even expresses his displeasure like Hia-Lian...

"We will be strangers."

Kuea Keerati nods and steps out of the car after the driver opens the door for him. Too drunk to stand straight, he leans against the first townhouse in the alley.

"Which house is yours?"

Fake Hia-Lian gets out to support him. He's... so nice. So nice that Kuea wishes he was Hia-Lian. But Hia-Lian can never be this nice. No way.

"Third... The third one."

The secret house is no longer a secret. It should be fine, since this man is a stranger. It's not like Kuea needs to keep it completely hidden. This place is just his safe zone where he can live as himself, as Kuea, not Nu-Kuea... One day it will not be a secret because Nu-Kuea is fading away. Hia-Lian doesn't want Nu-Kuea anymore.

"Just rest. Don't think of anything."

The car drives off until the sound disappears. Kuea Keerati plops down on the leather couch, thinking about how fortunate that nothing terrible happened. He wasn't too carried away or too desperate to do something stupid. Luckily, the man just gave him a ride. Luckily, the only thing he lost was a kiss...his first kiss, the one he'd saved for Hia-Lian.

The romantic wish of a little boy to have his first kiss with his loved one... Kuea has given it to someone else... A small part

of his love for Hia-Lian has been taken away. At least Hia-Lian doesn't own every part of him. Kuea's first kiss doesn't belong to him.

Gilayn Wang watches the glass of booze in his residence above the Pentagon. It's already four in the morning, but he's too troubled to sleep. His slightly swollen lips press together before he sighs. He crosses his legs under the black bathrobe and leans his back in the elegant black chair at the dining table. His sharp eyes are fixed on a picture of a boy in a school uniform with an elephant balloon in his right fist, his left hand holding the hand of a boy in suspenders, whose big smile makes his round eyes curve: The thirteen-year-old Gilayn Wang and Kuea Keerati at the age of six. Kuea was upset that he didn't visit him for days because he was busy with the final exams, so he bought him a balloon. Lian does not know why he brought this photo from his house in the old town to his place. Besides, it's the same picture hanging on the wall above the one-million-worth superbike in Kuea's place.

The secret house he has finally found.

The scattering jigsaw pieces Lian has been gathering have started to take shape. There are so many pieces left to find. Tracking his fiancé may sound easy, but practically it's not. Kuea Keerati is a real biker. Lian's men fail to catch up with the pricy BMW superbike, and Kuea always rides it in small alleys where large cars can't squeeze through. Worse, the traffic jam in Bang Rak is horrendous.

The final location, Kuea's living place, is in Bang Rak. It even

requires you to walk on foot to reach there. The narrow townhouse hides in a maze of alleys in a residential area.

Lian's big hands remove the frame. Behind the photo hidden a black card with a Kirin printed on it. The Kirin is designed in a modern graphic pattern, with 'KIRIN' in embossed letters next to it. A name card of a mysterious drummer he got by chance. The contact information at the back includes his email and YouTube channel. He wouldn't have suspected anything if it wasn't for the image of the Kirin, and if the drummer on the YouTube channel and his fancé weren't as alike as two peas in a pod. Kuea covers his face so well that no one recognizes him... except Lian.

Other people might not recognize Kuea Keerati, but Gilayn Wang has seen Nu-Kuea since the day he was born into this world.

The unreadable smile plasters on Lian's face as he flips the black card with his strong fingers before putting it back in place. The tall figure rises and finishes his glass, his sharp eyes landing on the smiley six-year-old boy in the photo frame.

"What else are you hiding from me, Nu-Kuea? Hmm?"

His sharp eyes soften, reflecting gentleness. In another second, they gleam like a predator about to attack its prey. Kuea Keerati is testing his patience, and he's good at it. Gilayn Wang hasn't felt this excited in a while. The porcelain doll in the display cabinet he's been cherishing rebelled and transformed into the Annabelle doll. What made him think he wouldn't notice? There is only one doll occupying Gilayn Wang's display cabinet, after all. If Nu-Kuea wants to play this game, he will play with him.

Gilayn Wang has been Kuea Keerati's playmate for a long time.  
In exchange for Nu-Kuea's smile, Lian would always surrender.  
Gilayn Wang let Kuea Keerati win for all of his life...but not  
this time.