

# Nice Versa<sup>1</sup>



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# Vice Versa Vol. 1 / by JittiRain

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# **Vice Versa Vol. 1**

# 01

## AEGEAN

DING!

The new email notification jolts me out of my chair. Instead of reading it immediately, I walk around the table several times, telling myself to take a deep breath to calm my nerves. However, my hand holding the phone is shaking terribly.

Considering their sudden reply, it's a miracle I haven't fallen head-first.

This is a significant email on which my life depends. After waiting for weeks, I finally received a reply from the studio. The thing is, I need to see how it turns out.

All right, time to face the truth.

One, two, three!

I can't hold my excitement!

Even if I'm too afraid to open it, I have to do it eventually. I muster up the last bit of my courage and click on the email before my eyes.

*'Dear Mr. Rawi Lerdpanya,'*

Okay. The name is correct. Definitely not a mistake.

I sweep my eyes over the message before my heart races dramatically when I read this sentence.

*'We are looking forward to working with you.'*

HOLY SHIT!

I'm about to enter the coming-of-age stage of becoming a first jobber like others.

I finally got hired by my dream studio as I had hoped. Good job. I feel so amazing that I want to announce it to the world by withdrawing all my money to publicize myself for a whole year.

Then I realize I'm nearly broke.

Unable to keep the joy to myself, I close the email and call someone. He picks up after a few seconds.

The first call...

"Hello, Jo, my buuuddy."

[Hey, what's up? You sound happy.] It seems he senses my overflowing delight, so I fill him in with my exciting story.

"I have good news."

[You won the lottery?]

"No. Try again."

[Boo returned the three hundred baht he owed you?] Ugh, I almost forgot my friend owed me the money. Not to mention he borrowed it two years ago. I guess it has been discomposed.

"Wrong. Try again. One more chance."

[Just tell me. I'm freaking curious. Quit building the anticipation, you piece of shit.] I must have overdone it and angered Jo. Let's get to the point, then.

"Listen carefully. The good news is I got a job!"

[Unbelievable! At BFB?]

My best friend asks in disbelief, so I remind him this is not a dream.

"Yeah. I knew it just now. They emailed me earlier."

[Congrats, dude. I'm about to cry. You're the last one in our gang.]

"I'm crying right now. Boohoo." I'm acting as if I'm on a film set. Well, I'm over the moon right now.

[We gotta celebrate.]

"Sure thing. My treat."

[Yeah!]

"Yeah. Hanging up now. I'll be happy with myself a little more."

[Sure. Talk later tonight.]

By being happy with myself, I'm not spending my time alone as you might think. I call the second person straight away.

"Gyo."

[Yaaaas?]

"I have some exciting news." Again. Like a replayed movie.

[What is it?]

"I got a job."

[Holy hell! Is it the position of a colorist\*?] Her scream pierces

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\* Colorist takes care of color-grading and color correction in films, dramas, series, or commercials.

through my ears. My friend probably feels more thrilled with the good news than I do.

"I'm starting as an assistant, but it's enough to make me super happy."

[This is the good news of the year. We have no choice but to celebrate]

"Yup. We'll go all out."

[No stopping 'til we get drunk, okaaaay?]

"For sure. Hey, hanging up now. I'll be happy with myself a little more."

[Go ahead.]

The third call...

"Hello, Dolllll."

[It's Dou. *Talay*, you rolling your tongue totally ruined the mood.] Though he replies in an awfully irritable voice, I don't care. I replay the scene.

"Guess why I called you."

[I don't know. Is there something exciting?]

"I'm going to tell you now. Brace yourself."

[Is it good news or bad news?]

"Good news."

[Spill.]

"I got a job. You guys don't have to be on edge for me anymore."

[Whoaaaaa.] He rolls his tongue way worse than me. After being dramatic, his cheeky voice slowly trembles. [I feel like crying. You were training at a small production house, but now you've

gone places.]

The voice on the other end sounds extremely excited. I can't hold back my smile.

"I'm thinking of celebrating with you guys. I'll tell you later where."

[Sure! You'll be working at a famous studio. I can't miss it.]

"Thanks, Dou. When I was broke, I had you finding me odd jobs." Though the jobs were cat sitting at his place at times.

[Well, you're my friend.]

Before things get emotional, I will end it here. If Dou cries, I'll have to comfort him for about an hour without getting anything done.

"Yeah. Hanging up now. I'll be happy with myself a little more."

[Okay, hic.]

There it is. He's started sobbing. Good thing I've hung up, or Bangkok will drown in his tears.

The fourth call...

I guess I'm too happy for myself as my actions contradict my thoughts, considering how I'm calling the whole gang. Before I know it, the last one in my mass communication gang has answered the call.

"Poppy-honey, I love you."

[There must be good news if you're saying you love me.]

He knows me so well.

"The world must remember this impressive occurrence of the day."



[Just get to the point. Why the hell are you beating around the bush?]

"Listen carefully, bud. Hoo~" Let me put my hand over my chest and breathe out for a second.

Even though I've made quite a few calls, my excitement isn't subsiding. It, on the contrary, noticeably increases, making my friend shoot in a cheeky voice.

[Will I get to hear it in this lifetime? Or do I need to die first?]

"That's too much. The good news is I got a job."

[Oh, wow.]

My big smile slowly fades as doubts arise in my mind. Besides that emotionless 'Oh, wow,' he says nothing more, unlike the first three who got all dramatic.

"Why do you sound not so happy for me?"

[Do I? Here's the thing, Talay...] Pop pauses before continuing. [Turn on the camera.]

What's with him?

Despite my growing confusion, I can't be bothered to ask again. I turn on the camera as requested. And the second the sight appears, I find out that...

TA-DA!!!

[Surprise~]

My friends shout together in playful tones. Also, they're all there, not a single person absent. I'm the only one idling in my place.

"Shit, you guys are all together?"

[You've forgotten everything. We're filming together. It'd be

weird if we weren't together.] I mean, Dou, who works on CGI as he's not good at filmmaking, is there. I, who stay home alone, am the weird one here.

"So when I called you..."

[You called us around the table. Aw, you said you'd be happy with yourself, yet all our phones kept buzzing.] His teasing words make me ashamed. I quickly reply in embarrassment, cracking a dry laugh.

"Hey, you're speaking too much. Jeez."

They roll their eyes. Who told them to be on a film set together?

[Quit blabbering and get to the point. Where are we celebrating?]

"Do you feel like going to the sea? I'll pay for the trip," I offer. The eyes of those four human beings sparkle simultaneously.

[You serious?]

"I'm a man of my word."

I smile. My friends smile. We smile at each other through the camera while imagining a luxurious sea trip.

Just to find out later that...

"Hey."

"What?"

"The sea in my mind was the Maldives. How come we turned up at the Bang Kapong Dum Beach?"

Jo's question hurts my little heart. I thought of some better places. Not the Maldives or anything like that, though. There are

loads of beautiful beaches in Thailand, but a first jobber such as me isn't loaded. I can only take them to the one near Bangkok.

"Come on." I pat my friend's shoulder before shooting a sheepish smile to the others, who stare ahead in a daze next to me.

"It's freaking crowded. They will get in our photos no matter what," Jo keeps complaining.

"Have you heard about a retouching application? Do you know Photoshop?"

"You sold dreams to us. I want to throw my sandals at your face."

"Bang Kapong Dum has its own charm. Cheer up."

"I'm freaking cheering up."

That's Gyo. She's probably the saddest as she looked up tons of photo references. She also prepared a lot of two-piece swimsuits.

We don't play in the water during the daytime since we're nearly stomped on by the crowd. We decide to go straight to the resort. Fortunately, there's a small swimming pool to kill the boredom. It makes my friends feel better.

What about me? Who plays in the swimming pool on a sea trip? We're supposed to do this...opening the acceptance email from the studio and daydreaming for the millionth time.

"Your gums will be dry from smiling too much."

I divert my eyes from my laptop to the voice owner striding in. I can tell Jo is mocking me just by looking at his cheeky face. He's actually been doing this since we traveled here.

"Well, I'm feeling happy."

"Okay then, you obsessed first jobber." With that, he flops on the canvas bed next to me.

Jo is my best buddy, my first college friend. We know each other well in everything. Be it preferences, dreams, or even tons of secrets we keep for one another.

"Why did you bring your laptop?" His keen eyes drop on my make-a-living tool on my lap.

"Just to be safe. In case there's something urgent."

It's a force of habit, I assume. After graduation, besides taking care of Kaprao and Horapa, Dou's British Shorthairs, I did color-grading for YouTubers to earn money while hunting for a full-time job. That's why I always stay in front of the screen and carry my laptop everywhere.

"I don't think there'll be anything urgent. The guys are jumping into the pool right now, can't you see?"

Upon hearing that, I turn my attention to the movements in front of me. My other three friends are having fun splashing in the water.

"I caaaan." That's when my mind is taken over by my beloved job. "What if I color-grade their skin tones to orange-ish to make things look brighter and cuter?"

"Orange-ish, my ass! Can you stop thinking of mood and tone for a sec? We're here to relax, not work." Despite his irritated expression, I don't care.

"The lavender purple of the floating tubes stands out too much. I fucking want to change it to mustard yellow."

"Jeez~"

"How about this? Let's change the entire mood. Turn the water into Aegean blue to fit the horror theme."

"You're really into this, huh? Horror, my ass!"

"It sounds mysterious. Just my style."

"I thought your style was pastel pink. When you color-grade short films, the mood is always so sweet that my eyes get blurry."

"I didn't do that to every project. I only allow pink in romantic scenes and ones with fatty pork."

Jo purses his lips irritatingly. Not responding to me, he averts his eyes to his phone screen and shouts loudly.

"Gyo! It's time."

When the only girl in the gang hears that, she quickly struggles to climb out of the pool. The action increases my curiosity.

"Why is she in such a hurry?"

"To watch the series," Jo answers with a deadpan face.

"Huh? At three?"

"It's a rerun."

"Who's in it?"

"Her favorite actor." I try to think of that man.

"Oh, I remember she almost bought all tickets for the movie he stars in last week."

"I mean, she's his fan."

"She freaking went all out. I even got dragged into it."

"I heard you helped her prepare his gift." I sigh, not denying it.

As the madly in love leader of the fandom, she both works and attends events. She didn't have time to prepare a gift for her love since her schedule was packed, so I, a jobless person, offered to take care of it.

"Come on, we love whom our friends love."

"Can I love your girlfriend, Jo?"

"You piece of shit! Don't annoy your seniors when you start working. I'm worried you won't pass the probation period." He nags like a father. Is he really my friend?

"Worry about yourself first."

"I'm proud of being a traffic guard. I don't have to worry about getting fired."

"I kay."

Jo got deceived that he would get to work in an important position on the set, but his main job turned out to be guarding the road. However, instead of feeling sad, he energetically posts photos of his task on SNS to show off every day.

The five of us actually had our own dreams, but they didn't last long as we had to struggle to feed ourselves, taking any opportunities coming our way. I was the only picky one. Wishing to work for the famous studio, I applied for no other jobs. Besides, the studio is open for applications only once a year.

As a result, I finally got a full-time job. A year later than my friends, though.

"Oh, shit..." My friend's voice brings me back to reality. I then feel drops of water on my skin.

"It's suddenly raining."

In the sunlight. With no sign or warning.

"Let's get inside, or your beloved laptop will get rained on."

Not waiting for my friend to finish the sentence, I rush inside immediately. The other two clumsily climb out of the pool in a panic.

I don't understand why they're in a hurry when they're already wet. Puddles now form over the tiles in the hallway.

I can only shake my head and set my laptop on the small table, then I call everyone to drink together before sundown.

We brought a lot of booze. There's no way we won't be wasted tonight.

And we are absolutely wasted, as expected. We start getting drunk in two hours, enjoyably talking about our memories until there's nothing to retell, yet the rain isn't stopping. The intoxication leads to me coming up with a silly idea.

Not drinking while chatting about funny stories. Not shuffling cards to show off our skills to everyone. It is...

"Wanna play in the water?"

"We just did in the late afternoon," Dou cuts in.

"I mean, in the sea."

"It's raining, crackhead. Plus, it's late," Poppy chimes in.

"I'm suggesting this because it's raining. After playing in the water, we can sit there and watch the sunset. Enjoying the vibe, you know?"

Before our youth is over. Before we won't have time to have fun with each other later in life. Since there's still a chance, I want to go wild with them for once.

"You sure?"

"Yeah."

Not allowing room for hesitation, I run outside first. My two feet feel the white sand after stepping out of the tiles. The faster I run, the more I feel like flying. When it's all replaced by the coolness of the seawater, I lunge right into the waves.

Turning around, I laugh as I see my friends charging forward like those zombies in *The Walking Dead*.

A few seconds after looking at that sight, I float on my back, surrounded by nature, letting the waves hit me repeatedly, my body carried away by the current.

My eyes are glued to the sky above. It displays raindrops falling down continuously. The sky color gradually alters according to the movements of the sun.

...Is this what they call the golden hour?

"Wooooo!" I holler, sweeping my arms through the water as I take in everything around me.

I love colors.

Also, I love the sea. I love its color. Be it when the sunlight shines on the surface or when the shades change due to the weather.

I often hear people say, 'Nothing beats seeing things in person.' Seeing the sky, the stars, and the sea with my own eyes is indeed remarkable as claimed.

After studying for years and watching loads of movies, I discovered another thing of beauty. It's the beauty of seeing things through filters. The seawater is no longer the familiar blue. It can be any color or mood, depending on how we adjust it.

"Don't go too far," my friend shouts from behind.

"I know!"

"Come here and play together," they call for me again. I quit being stubborn to go further.

"Okay."

And so, I turn towards the beach. After swimming for



a moment, my legs suddenly go numb.

I don't know why it's happening. In shock, I gather my strength and quicken my strokes, but I can't move even an inch forward. My body is slowly pushed under the surface.

As I struggle to swim in the massive sea, a small part of my brain tells me to call my best friend in the distance, though I have no idea if he will hear me.

"Jo!!!"

Aside from my legs, both my arms begin to go numb. Not giving up, I try my best to resurface.

"Jo, he..."

My body doesn't listen, unfortunately. I can't even ask for help, which lessens my hope to zero.

*Help, help me...*

I just want to live, follow my dream, and do so many things I haven't done, but...

In my blurry vision, I see Jo swimming toward me. He will save me in a few moments.

*But I don't know why it feels like it's going to be too late...*

GASP!

The feeling of running out of air has been engraved in my brain.

Despite being wide-open, my eyes take a while to adjust to the light. My other senses start to work again. Even though I barely have the strength to move my body, my nose catches the smell I despise.

The smell of hospitals.

The brightness of the sight before me slowly clears out.

The first thing I see is three people staring at me.

One of them is an old man. The other one is a woman dressed fancily. The last one is a man in a crisp dark shirt. We stare at one another. When I blink, he blinks. It continues for some time until someone's voice reaches my ears.

"Your friends said your condition was severe."

Blinking, I wish I could reply but my body doesn't comply. I can only force myself to speak with my hoarse, incomprehensible voice.

"I..."

"How many times are you planning to cause trouble? I'm sick of dealing with everything for you."

Wait, what the hell is happening?

I woke up in a hospital for some reason with a stranger nagging with seemingly no intention of stopping.

"You hit someone with your car last time. Now you had a physical fight with others. You're such a..."

He begins to raise his voice, so I cut in with my quivering voice as best I can.

"You..."

"..."

"Who...are you?" The man's eyes nearly pop out.

"What did you just say, you brat?! After causing trouble, you've got the nerve to pretend to have amnesia?" Whoa, what kind of nonsense is this? He must've walked into the wrong room.

"I'm not pretending. Who are...all of you? And...where are my friends?"

I remember I was swimming in the sea, then my body went numb. I struggled to stay afloat and shouted for help for a while, thinking it was probably my last moment. I didn't expect myself to wake up surrounded by none of my friends and family. There are only strangers scolding me, shaking.

"How could you ask who I am? Y...You dare to cut ties with your father?"

"I'm not your son."

"Huh?!"

"I'm not your son," I repeat, loud and clear, but my words seem to add fuel to the fire.

"You damn brat. Ungrateful bastard, biting the hand that feeds you." What a combo.

I wish I could tell him my dad is Piak, and he's probably sipping his coffee at home. I can't find the right moment to say that since the man's hand is flying towards me. It would have struck my head had the woman at his side not stopped him.

"Don't hit our son."

"Look at him. Look at what he said to me."

"He's still injured."

Despite that, the father pays no mind. He shakes his arm off her grip and...smacks me.

That fucking hurts!

"I'll draw blood out of your head today."

"Dear, please don't hit our son."

The woman tries to stop the man while he's so hell-bent on hitting me. What in the world is going on?

The first strike is on my arm. I don't know where he hits me the second and the third time as I'm busy dodging. The pain isn't that bad, but I'm afraid I'll drop dead right here. I attempt to survive by rolling out of the bed.

THUD!

Ouuuuuch!

My body is weak and my bones hurt. Not to mention these bruises. I'm all battered.

"Fucking brat! Huff, huffff."

I turn to the man to witness the most pathetic scene. He puts his hands over his chest with bulging eyes before collapsing and panting. The only woman in the room lunges in to support his body and wails so loud my ears almost bleed.

"Dear~"

They're obviously acting. The man is pretending to faint as the woman is being pretentiously dramatic. What a rare sight.

Give them a damn Oscar.

Ignoring their fake asses, I scramble into the bathroom and lock the door.

Did my friends bring me to the film set by any chance? A candid camera! There must be a camera hidden somewhere.

With that thought, I gather all the strength I have left to stand up with much difficulty to, firstly, explore the bathroom.

DUN!

If this was a movie, there would be a horror sound effect and some evil spirit jumping out to scare the hell out of me. There's no ghost, though, only the sight of someone in the mirror.

No matter how many times I rub my eyes, it remains the same.

I try touching my face and tilting my head left and right, and my heart drops.

Fuck!

The face, hair, and body aren't mine.

Whose body am I in?

Besides, this body has so many purple and green bruises that I can barely catch the skin tone.

Thinking this might be a long dream, I slap my face once. The numbness spreads across my cheek, making my tears drop.

I'm not sure if I'm crying because of the pain or because I'm facing the most unfortunate event in my life. All I know is I have to deal with this confusion somehow.

Knock, knock, knock.

Someone is knocking on the bathroom door from the outside. I wipe my tears with my sleeve before opening the door to face them.

"Who am I?"

The three people look perplexed, but the man in a dark shirt is the first to pull himself together.

"Quit joking, **Tess**. No one's laughing."

Hold up, who's Tess?

"I'm also not laughing. I'm not the person you're talking about. I...I..."

"Tess~ Oh, my son," The woman whimpers, rushing to pull me in her arms. This is not a hug, more like a headlock.

"Miss, I think there's a misunderstanding."

"I understand, dear, but this is not working." Aside from not listening to me, she whispers something weird, "Act emotional. Make him feel sorry for you and it will be okay."

"Huh?"

"My son, poor you."

"But I..."

"It must hurt so much. I think the doctor should check on you one more time. Darling...can't you see that he's hurt? He's reflected on his action." Wow. She's being dramatic again without waiting for my response.

The delicate body finally pulls away. The woman stares at me as if signaling something. Even if I oppose the idea, I, feeling pressured, force myself to do it.

"Waaaaaaah."

Damn, I have to fake crying out of the blue so the other person can play along with the same emotion.

"Why do you have to force yourself, Tess?"

"Waaaaaaah."

Amid the fakest cry in the hospital, I can only roll my eyes, overwhelmed by all sorts of feelings.

The first sentence popping up in my head is...

What did I do to deserve this!!!!

He is so close to becoming an assistant colorist at his dream production house.

But Talay drowns in the sea and wakes up in Tess's body.

He is a man of the same age with a pretty frivolous life.

Also, he realizes he is in 'a parallel universe.'

Who can accept that? The only thing he has to do is find a way to return home!

One day, there's a light shining through the darkness in his heart.

He meets Puwadol, a male nurse from his universe.

This kind man tells him that, in order to return home, he needs to find someone.

That person must come from the same universe and share the same fate.

If he finds that person, there will be a sign indicating the person is his 'portkey.'

No matter how hard he tries, no one is likely to be that person.

One day, he stumbles across a primary school yearbook.

Inside is a photo of Tess wrapping his arm around someone seemingly close to him...

Is Pakorn Uea-angkun possibly his portkey?