

-Kao-

Pete... is an outgoing and overly active guy.
He'll be cheerful and happy especially when he's with girls.
But he always complains that girls are troublesome.
And, as a good friend, I always counsel him.
But the thing is, I have a crush on him!

-Pete-

Kao...is a person I hated at first sight.
He's self-important, foul-mouthed, and only good at studying.
But we unexpectedly ended up in the same group of friends.
And then we became closest friends.
But the thing is, I think he's getting cuter every day!

Prologue

(Hate) at First Sight

At a high school

"Shall we go?"

'Kao' walked towards his two friends who were waiting for him when he'd gone to the restroom. They'd planned to celebrate the end of the final exam at a barbecue restaurant today. Since that exam was the last one they'd taken as high school students, they'd graduate and go to different universities.

"We're waiting for you and Ren," One of his friends answered.

'Ren' was his other friend in the same group. He had an elder brother named 'Sun,' who had graduated from the university and was planning to open a café. Kao heard that he was interested in a location near the school.

"What?! Ren's not here yet?" Kao asked in surprise.

"No! He said he'd go to the restroom for a while ago."

"Damn it, why isn't he here yet? Did he die in the restroom?"

"He might be flirting with some girls. Will he leave us to hang out with girls?"

"Did you call him?" Kao asked after listening to his friends

complaining.

"I gave him a call, but he didn't pick up."

"Wait here then, I'll go get him."

Kao walked back into the school and went straight to the eleventh-grade building. He remembered the floor where the girl whom Ren was 'talking to' studied on. He thought Ren might want to say goodbye or plan to see her before he graduated.

Classes were over for a while now. There was barely anyone left in the school. It was so quiet that Kao could hear his own footsteps. He kept walking until he reached the destination. And then! He heard a ruckus from a corner of the building. It was like there was a fight. He halted in shock by that noise.

"I'm sorry! I had no idea she was going out with you."

"Sorry?! Isn't that too easy?"

"But I really had no idea. I'm sorry."

Ren's voice snapped Kao back to his senses. He ran to see what was happening. What he saw made him so shocked that he turned pale. A group of boys was beating his friend up.

Ren's face was swollen, blood seeping through the corner of his mouth and his uniform was dirty. A big-built boy was grabbing his collar while another boy who seemed like the leader crossed his arms and watched them, looking satisfied.

This is too much. Why do they have to beat him up like that?!

"Hey! Stop it!"

He shouted as if he wasn't afraid to get killed, but, seeing his friend in this state, he couldn't stand it. The whole group,

especially 'Pete,' the leader, turned to look at Kao immediately. Pete sneered. The way he looked at Kao was so intimidating that Kao felt scared, but he tried to work up the courage.

He'd gone this far, how could he get chickened out and run away?

"All of you on one person, isn't it too cowardly?!"

Those words slipped out without a thought. His shout filled those boys' eyes with anger. Kao took a step back and gulped because he was scared that they'd change their target to be him.

If he hadn't wanted to help Ren, he would've run away already. Even if he could fight, there were five of them, so he wouldn't be able to beat all of them, plus they all looked intimidating.

The most important thing was Kao didn't know how to fight at all!

One more thing...Kao remembered that these boys had been called to the Student Discipline Office many times. His school life and theirs were like 'two parallel lines.' He'd never thought he'd have to confront them like this. He actually thought it was a shame for Pete. Pete was good-looking, rich, and had everything he wanted, but he'd chosen to be a rascal, misbehave, and pick fights with other people.

Pete's life must be so comfortable and free of problems. That was why he kept looking for them.

"Should we beat him up, Pete?!"

The boy who was grabbing Ren's collar threw him to the other two friends to lock up his arms. He turned to deal with Kao, but Pete held out his hand to stop him, though it seemed

like he had 'targeted' Kao.

"No need to! A weakling like him will die if we kick his ass."

"Why are you doing this to my friend?" Kao clenched his fists after hearing the insult.

"Your friend messed with my girl! And you...stay out of this if you don't want to get hurt." Pete bellowed and stared at Ren who had been beaten black and blue as if he'd been run over by a truck. "And you, keep your mouth shut."

After he said this, he nodded to his friends, and walked away without casting one last glance at Kao. The rest of them followed, not forgetting to warn Ren not to tell anyone about this if he didn't want to get hurt.

"Hey, are you okay?!"

Kao ran forwards to check up on Ren who had been thrown to the ground. He helped him up in worry. Looking at Ren now, Kao was so angry that he wanted to report it to the police.

They thought they could do anything because they were rich?!

"I'm not okay, obviously," Ren said, groaning.

"Should we report it to the police? They had the gall to do something like this to you. They might do it again."

"What good will it do if we report it to the police? His father's rich, so he'd be bailed anyway. If he knows we report it to the police, he's gonna kill me next time," Ren said, wiping the blood off his mouth.

"You're sure scared of them, huh?"

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. If I stop seeing 'Mint,' they'll probably leave me alone," Ren said.

Actually, Ren knew it was his fault for dating Pete's girl, But he hadn't had any idea she was dating Pete as well. If he'd known...he wouldn't've put himself in danger by going out with her. Everyone in the school knew that if they wanted to have good lives and future, they must not get in the way of Pete's gang.

"Whatever you say. But how can you have a barbecue with us in this state?"

"Can we take a rain check? Take me to the doctor first. I'm about to lose all my blood."

Seeing his friend could still joke, Kao shook his head. But it was good that Ren wasn't an overthinking or vengeful person, otherwise Ren might try to get back at Pete until one of them were beaten up to death!

Time had passed by...

At the Faculty of Engineering

N University

Even though the first semester hadn't started, the second-year students arranged the ice-breaking activities for the freshmen. Kao went to university early in the morning. When he got out of the bus, he followed the sound of congas and singing to the front of the faculty, then he looked up at the sign on the building.

Kao smiled, feeling happy, because he got into this university as his family had expected. His scores were also high. It made him and his family feel so proud.

Thinking of the exam, Kao felt very lucky. After he'd almost gotten into a fight with Pete's gang and seemed to be targeted,

he'd been afraid that he'd never find peace in life and be harassed by them. Fortunately, after that day, they'd been busy about getting into university that Pete hadn't had time to pick a fight with him.

Even though Pete used to be a rascal who had caused trouble every day during high school, Pete's father wouldn't allow his only son to misbehave to the point that he couldn't get into university.

"Hey, you!"

Kao turned to the guy who had called and poked him. He seemed to be the same age as his and dressed in casual clothes as well. Kao guessed he was his fellow Engineering student.

"What's the matter?"

"Are you also a first-year Engineering student? I'm June. What's your name?" June introduced himself with such a bright and friendly smile that Kao had to force a smile back even though he thought June was a weird person.

How can someone be so outgoing?!

"Kao."

"Kao that means prosperous, right? What an auspicious name."

"Kao...as number nine. What about June? June that means to get a hold of yourself!"

"Are you messing with me, fucker?"

Kao was taken aback because June called him 'fucker' in just about two minutes into their conversation as if they were so close. June ignored his reaction, wrapped his arm around Kao's neck, and walked into the faculty's building without care. June kept

talking to him as if they'd been friends for years. Kao was a bit confused but still walked with June. June was from the same faculty, so Kao thought it was better to make friends, not enemies. They had to be together for four years anyway.

The ground floor of the faculty's building was bustling with activities. The second-year students were waiting to welcome the freshmen. The sound of singing and congas were so loud as if it was Sports Day. A group of seniors was dancing to the activity songs. Since everyone was having fun as if they were drunk, June asked Kao to stop to take a look and made funny comments.

After a few conversations, they felt closer to each other. June was fun to talk to and very funny. He told Kao that he came from a southern province. He shared a room near the university with 'King,' his high school friend. King went to another university in this area.

"Do you see that handsome guy standing by himself over there?"

June asked as they followed the seniors to get their name signs at the registration table. Kao followed June's eyes to a guy who was standing alone. He was tall and very good-looking.

"Is he a half-breed? His nose bridge is so high."

"He's not alone. Those seniors are talking to him."

"Right! That's the point!" June sounded frustrated because Kao had interrupted him. "He's a good-looking half-breed. We should get to know him. If he becomes our friend, it'll be great for us in the future."

"How?"

"Look at him. The seniors are all over him since his first day here."

"So what?"

"It means the seniors are fond of him. It'll be more convenient if the seniors are fond of you."

June grabbed Kao's arm and dragged him to the target, not waiting for his opinion. The seniors left when they reached their target, so June took this opportunity to greet him.

"Hey, you!" June greeted that person exactly the same as when he'd done to Kao. "I'm June. This is my friend, Kao. What's your name?"

The guy who had been asked looked so confused that Kao had to stifle his laugh. It was the same expression Kao had before.

"Thada," That person answered.

"That's a Thai name. I thought you'd have a foreign name since you're a half-breed." June blurted out without care. Kao poked him in warning. "But I think it's cool. You have a good name. Did you get your name sign? Let's go get it together."

June took 'Thada' to the line to get their name signs together, then he kept talking to them as if they'd been friends for years. Thada and Kao didn't talk much. June was the only one who chattered away.

Thada and June got their name signs. Kao was the last one of the group. He was putting his name down when he saw a girl putting her name down beside him. She was tall, dressed smart, and looked manly. Even girls were looking at her.

And she looked up at that moment.

"Kao? Do you have a sibling named 'Ten'?"

"No, my sister's name is 'Gib.' What about you? You're 'Sandee.' Do your siblings' names have 'San' in their names as well?"

When Sandee had teased his name with a smile, he'd done it to hers, too. Then they both walked out of the registration area together. June and Thada who were waiting outside came to join them.

"You'll be amazed," Sandee said. "I have four bigger sisters: Sanseuy, Sanson, Sanruk, and Sanwan."

Kao, June, and Thada looked like they couldn't believe it. Sandee laughed.

"Didn't my mom give us such cool names?" Whenever she told someone her siblings' names, everyone would always react like this. Sandee thought it was funny. "We're the San Sisters. 'Kao' sounds so simple comparing to this."

"If 'Kao' is simple, then 'June' is incredibly simple," Kao said and turned to June, then they introduced themselves to each other. Unexplainably, all of them felt comfortable around each other.

"Oh! I'll introduce my friend to you. Be right back."

When Sandee left to get her friend, June immediately looked at Kao.

"You're flirting with a girl on the first day? That's dope."

"I'm not flirting. She's a friend."

June was about to speak when Sandee dragged her friend here to meet them. At that second, Kao's eyes widened. He was

stunned, and he was sure the other person felt the same.

Because the friend Sandee was going to introduce to us...
was Pete, the one who had targeted him!

1

Friend

The Faculty of Engineering
N University

Normally, in an early morning like this, a cafeteria wasn't a popular place for most students since they already had a hard time waking up for morning classes. However, that wasn't the case for Sandee and her friends.

Sandee and Kao usually came early before the class started, while Pete and June would occasionally hang out until the sun came up and go to class right away, leaving the gang wondering what sort of energy their bodies possessed. For Thada, it depended on his several part-time jobs as he needed to pay for his own tuition fee.

"There's a group report due next Monday. June and Thada will be with me. And Kao will be with Pete."

Sandee assigned them into a group for an elective subject in Social Studies since she knew they would postpone the work and end up staying late at night before the deadline, trying hastily to finish the report.

Although Sandee was the youngest among her friends (she'd attended school faster than children of her age), she was the one who assigned their groups, reminded them to finish works, and dragged them to study before the exams. Contrary to Thada who was the oldest—he'd attended university a year late—he had no idea about these things.

You couldn't blame him, though. As he was short of money, he had to spend most of his time doing part-time jobs. It was good enough that Thada could attend classes in time, complete every assignment, and pass all exams. Pete was the oldest in the group as well, but...he couldn't care less about urging everyone to study. He was all about party!

"What the hell?!" Kao and Pete shouted simultaneously.

"Why not?" Sandee gave them a stern look, then she sighed and said, "It's because we need three members in a group but there are five of us. Look. It's only Kao and me that are clever enough to work on the report. The rest of you normally have one responsibility—writing your name down."

"Hey, you're exaggerating! We also help."

"Shut your mouth, June." Sandee gave him a death glare. She wouldn't deny the fact that she always forced everyone to help each other, but Pete, Thada, and June were pretty much useless.

"Why do I have to be with Kao? Can I stay with you?"

"Got a problem, Pete? Or you want me to be with Kao and leave the three of you together?"

"No way, Madame!" June and Thada refused immediately.

"So that's that," Sandee said. She sighed again because

Pete and Kao didn't seem too satisfied, "Why do you hate each other so much, huh? We've been together for a semester and even joined ice-breaking activities. Our seniors told us to maintain our friendship. But you guys, friends in the same group, hate each other so much."

"You're wrong..." Kao tried to make an excuse.

"So tell me, it's so obvious that both of you don't want to work together."

Sandee gave them a reprehensive look. The only good thing was, despite the hate, Kao and Pete were still in the same group of friends. They'd been through the activities during the Welcome Ceremony together. But that was because Sandee, Thada, and June had played an important role in stopping them from fighting.

Kao wasn't that bad. But Pete obviously had a prejudice against Kao to the point that no matter what Kao did, Pete would get irritated.

Sandee used to understand why they hated each other. She thought they just needed time, but...she was wrong. They still disliked each other in spite of the fact that they'd been friends for a whole semester.

Sandee believed that Pete and Kao would ruin the relationship between the five of them if they continued fighting. That was why she always paired them up so that they would get closer. But her plan never seemed to be accomplished since they had so many problems when being together.

Now, she wasn't confident about her plan at all. It seemed like they would rather fight than getting closer.

"There goes the drama queen." Thada sighed—he was getting tired of this. "Can you just work together, man? Don't make her upset. She's already got enough problems with June and I that she could have a migraine."

"He's right! What the hell is wrong with working together?" June added, afraid that Sandee might change her mind and work with Kao, leaving him with Thada and Pete. That would suck. "We're all friends. Stop hating each other, man."

"Fine. I'll be with Kao. Sandee, you don't have to be so dramatic," Pete said unwillingly. He looked at Kao who didn't seem too happy to work with him either.

Let's see...if they could make it through the end!

After classes

"Are you going to sing at the pub tonight? I want to meet Thanwa."

Pete asked Thada as they walked down the hall after the last class had ended. Thanwa, a good-looking 23-year-old man, was Thada's senior. Thada got to know him because Thanwa and his band played live music at the same pub. Thanwa was a leader and a lead vocalist of the band.

Thada and Thanwa planned to open a tattoo parlor named 'Thada Studio' soon, as Thada used to work in a tattoo parlor, learn tattoo art, and love designing it. He had skills.

"Of course. I need money."

"Damn, you work hard." June teased him.

"What about you, June? Coming?" Pete asked.

"I want to, but my mom just called me. She said we're short of money right now, so I'll get my allowance a bit late." June sighed, feeling sorry for himself. "I've gotta survive with instant noodles for a while."

"Don't worry. Tonight, it's my treat," Pete said, putting his arm around June's neck playfully. It wasn't a big deal for him to pay for his friends as he was the richest one in the group.

"What about the report next Monday?" Sandee asked, her voice stern.

"Just go for tonight and finish it this weekend. You can't say no, okay?"

They never cursed when talking to Sandee, the only girl in the group, because she never swore even once, and they respected that.

But that was it!

Sandee might be the only girl, but she was so manly. She hung out with them all the time that they felt like she was a guy. Their classmate even 'shipped' Sandee and Thada* as a couple because they were close.

The funny part was that they imagined Sandee as the top and Thada the bottom!

"God damn right! It's only great if Sandee comes. The guys there won't mess with us and pretty girls will come to our table," June says happily. He was the most cheerful and talkative one in the group.

"You're always like this, using my number to lure the girls."

Sandee sighed tiredly. June always gave her phone number

* You can follow the story of Sandee and Thada in 'Natural Kiss'

and LINE ID to the girls who got interested in her. Because June knew, despite the fact that Sandee looked freaking manly, she surely wasn't a tomboy or lesbian.

That was why June used Sandee as a tool to get the girls' numbers for himself!

"Can't help it. The girls coming for you are very cute and tiny. Just my type."

"I wouldn't go because of what you just said."

"Come on. Don't you see? These guys will definitely steal my thunder, and the girls' numbers will be out of my reach."

June shook Sandee's arm pleadingly. Kao, Pete, and Thada always got the girls' attention when all of them hung out together. That was the reason why he needed Sandee to go. But June wasn't as upset as he pretended to be—it was only a joke. He had never been jealous of his friends, of course! Because they'd form a strong bond ever since they'd been freshmen. They had lots of things in common and joined at the hip. He would never sweat the small stuff.

"That's right! Don't say no. And you've gotta look handsome tonight," Pete told her.

"Whatever!" Sandee rolled her eyes.

She couldn't really say no, or else nobody was going to take their 'bodies' back home and remind them not to drink like a fish until sunrise. And the works due next Monday would never be done!

That night

K Pub

The moment Pete and his friends stepped inside, a staff rushed over and gave them a nice welcome since they were the regulars here. As Pete often gave generous tips, all staff knew him very well. They also appealed to the boys and girls who enjoyed the nightlife here, making them the center of attention in the pub.

Sandee...almost five-foot-five, with big curly hair—dark grey and pretty thick. She loved to wear black eyeliner to make her black eyes look striking. Even though Sandee was pretty interested in make-up and fashion, she was raised like a boy because her parents wanted a son as their youngest child. That was why her style was a mix of pretty and handsome, attracting both boys and girls.

Thada...six-foot-one, pretty slim but also fit and toned, a result of working out, which made him look attractive. He was half-Thai, half-French with blue-grey eyes and grey-brown shoulder-length hair. He usually tucked his hair behind one of his ears or did the half-up, half-down, letting his front hair loose to get a messy vibe with a hint of neatness. Thada usually wore casual clothes, but he still looked good.

Pete...six feet tall, well-built, 100 percent masculine-looking. He had a handsome face and tanned skin, with dark eyes and jet-black hair. As the only son of the real estate entrepreneur, he was well-known by his wealth.

Kao...five-foot-eight, slim but not skinny since he got enough muscles. He had a clean look like boy idols and

very fashionable. He was also very good-looking though differently from Pete. Kao was neater, friendly and easy-going. No doubt he was popular among girls.

June...five-foot-nine. He looked fairly good, and he was also talkative. He was actually quite popular but still on the hunt for more girls' numbers.

And the perfect 'key' of his plan was Sandee.

With their appearances, no wonder why June was so proud when they came to the pub together. He felt like a boy band's member about to hit the stage with many fangirls screaming their names.

Just their heights and looks could steal all spotlights!

"What a damn good spot."

June looked around the pub. Their table was right in the middle in front of the stage. Apart from being able to see everything from here, they became more outstanding.

"Of course it is. Pete gave them five-hundred baht."

Kao pursed his lips in mocking distaste, but Pete just shrugged, not giving one shit. They started ordering, and, after a moment, their table was filled with booze, drink mixers, and food.

The real party got started. June said 'cheers' to everyone and danced to the music blasting out of the loudspeakers, relieving stress built up in the past week.

"I gotta go get ready," Thada said after having fun with them for a while. "You guys take care of Sandee. I guess it's not just girls that are after her tonight. Look at those guys at that table..."

They're ogling at her."

"Already?" June followed Thada's gaze, seeing three guys looking at her from the next table. "Your score is higher than Pete today."

"I've got more than enough. I'm good." Pete shrugged, couldn't care less.

"But damn, San is on fire tonight. All the guys keep staring at her. Isn't it strange?" At June's remark, Pete and Kao immediately turned to Sandee, and then Pete squinted slightly, scanning her clothes with his eyes.

"Look at her clothes."

Pete was irritated. He didn't think she dressed too revealing at first. But now that he noticed how the guys looked at her, he realized she looked pretty seductive. With that black tank top and tight skinny jeans, he might've ogled at her too if they weren't friends. Girls would find this outfit cool while guys would find it sexy.

"What is this? I told you to look handsome tonight." Pete threw his jacket around her shoulders, glaring at her. "Cover yourself!"

"Oh, come-on!"

Although Sandee seemed annoyed, she wore the jacket as told. Kao watched both of them in silence and emptied his glass. He knew Pete had a soft spot for Sandee because she looked like his sister who'd recently passed away. It was the reason why he tried to improve himself as a brother. But Kao couldn't help but thought that Pete was overprotective.

Sometimes...It was hard to tell whether Pete was being 'protective' or 'possessive'!

Around 1 A.M.

The alcohol started to kick in, making Kao feel dizzy. He left his friends to take a leak and rest on a couch in front of the restroom for a while. Pete came to use the restroom while he's sitting there. No words had been exchanged. It was like they were strangers. Sandee must be left alone at the table right now since it was about time June went hunting for girls' numbers. Kao got up, deciding to go back to the table.

Kao wasn't usually worried about Sandee, but he couldn't help it today. Not when there were three guys from the next table who wouldn't stop staring at her. No matter how bold and manly Sandee might be, she was still a girl.

Kao hadn't even lifted his foot when he heard loud noises coming from the restroom.

"Is that girl at your table taken?!"

"It's none of your fucking business!"

Kao started to feel uneasy. It was obvious that wasn't a simple conversation; it was more like a fight. Kao couldn't recognize the first voice, but he was sure as hell another voice was Pete's!

"My friend likes her. If she's not yours, then stay out of it."

"Well, she's my friend." Pete was purposely trying to piss that guy off. Kao suddenly thought Pete was definitely born to be a troublemaker. "And it's my fucking choice whether to stay out of it or not."

"You just want to keep her to yourself."

"So what?! You think I'm gonna let you go near my friend speaking like that, huh? You fucking loser! Is that all you've got? Go fuck yourself if you've got no fucking game at all. She's not for you." Pete scoffed.

Even though Sandee was strong enough to take care of herself, Pete was still worried about her. He would never let a good person like her associate with these assholes. Sandee was not only his friend, but she was also similar to his little sister who had passed away.

And Pete also thought of Sandee as his little sister.

Kao poked his head into the restroom to take a look. He saw Pete was about to leave, but the other guy grabbed his shirt collar. And it was two people against Pete. Kao was afraid they would really get into a fight and things would get out of control, so he rushed inside and shouted, trying to draw the attention from people outside.

"Hey! What the hell are you guys doing?"

It worked! A few people came to see what was happening. The other guy released Pete's shirt collar even though he still glared at Pete like he was dying to punch him. Pete glared back, unshaken. His guts made Kao sigh heavily, then he followed Pete outside.

"Don't get into a fight. You're gonna get us all screwed." Kao warned Pete in a loud voice above the music as they were making their way back to their table through the crowd.

"You scared of them?" Pete asked, raising his eyebrow.

Kao could see the word 'you coward' in Pete's eyes.

"I'm not. But don't forget that Thada works here. You'd get him into trouble!"

Kao speeded up to the table, followed by Pete a moment later. The other guys also came back to their table. They glared at Pete as if they'd like a fight.

At that moment...Kao's intuition told him...that it was not over yet!

(To be continued)