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**Synopsis:**

College takes five years before it's over and it takes Kimberly and Chan five years before it even begins.

Or where handling the university's love column doesn't mean you're exactly good at love.

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**1ST YEAR**

**Dear White Rabbit,**

*It has been a couple of months since my bizarre situation— that is my ex guilt-tripping me on not seeing anyone because he hasn't moved on. You may be wondering, 'why not just cut him off?', and I really did want to but our academic lives are very intertwined with each other wherein it's going to be difficult to not be civil. It's frustrating because he randomly makes comments about my shortcomings in our relationship before while doing school work together. Adding a cherry on top is that he keeps trying to ask me out again after each quarrel. Of course, I'm not going to fall for that again and I've actually met someone who makes me feel loved... it just sucks that I don't really know how to balance everything right now. I am in desperate need of your help and will appreciate your words (even if it is just giving me a pitiful laugh).*

*Sincerely,*

*Lost Fish who's just wanting a 4.0 GPA and a healthy relationship*

**Dear Lost Fish,**

*First of all, \*pitiful laugh\* you are in quite a bind aren't you? Reading about how he's controlling you and how you're unconsciously just following him is not good for you— it's basically an example of mania, or obsessive love. He's obviously not going to get over you because he believes that you're still wrapped around his finger. You should lay your foot down and call him out whenever he crosses the line of being "friends" or "school mates" or whatever it is you guys are. Confront him about his rants about your previous relationship and set it to him straight that you guys will never get back together— it's time for you to stand your ground. Be theatrical if need be! Tell him to stop sticking his nose in your business and that you both are strictly studying together only, and if he can't agree to that then you won't try and maintain this bizarre friendship.*

*Second, while I am happy that you've found comfort and love in another person, it may be best to close previous-complicated relationships first and to focus on yourself. Dear, you need some time for yourself before you get in another relationship— you wouldn't want the same mistakes to happen, would you? These are my two cents for you, and I really hope that the future brings you that healthy relationship and 4.0 GPA you're wanting.*

*Fondly,*

*An Optimistic White Rabbit*

"I see that the column has been treating you well."

Kimberly turned around in her seat to see her best friend peeking in the office room. She shook her head in a giggle, "It's always interesting to hear the different problems relationships go through... and good input for me!"

"Ah of course~ future psychiatrist! But for now, a love counsellor!" Andrea clapped her hands, "I knew you'd be perfect for this role!"

In the first year of university, her best friend was set on enlisting them in the same organization so that they can work together since they won't be taking the same classes. Because they were both into communication and writing, Andrea signed them up for the Journalism organization— more specifically, the entertainment section.

As Kimberly was taking a double degree, she couldn't really take on bigger roles which is why Andrea had assigned her to the Love Catalyst, or dating advice column, since it's basically just reading the tea of problematic couples and giving them advice— two things Kimberly enjoys doing.

"The Alices never run out of juicy gossip." She continued, sitting down next to Kimberly. Alice was the collective term of the anonymous senders as everything in the section was Alice in Wonderland theme. When coming up with her alias, Andrea had suggested White Rabbit,

"Think about it! The White Rabbit is a very curious character and Alice couldn't help but follow him. It basically means that following the White Rabbit's advice will lead you in the middle of an extraordinary situation that may change your life!"

"They really don't." Kimberly sighed, clicking send to the mail to be posted in the club's site. "I'm just glad that my identity is kept a secret... it's like a superhero life."

For safety purposes, whoever writes for Love Catalyst remains confidential— just like the treatment of the people in charge of the freedom wall. It also makes people more comfortable to share their experiences and ask for advice that way.

"Oh girl, it's your main character energy moment~" Andrea winked, "And White Rabbit has a 95% success rate in their pieces of advice. It's missing the 5% because some just don't follow them."

"If only they knew that their advice is coming from someone with failed relationships." Kimberly said lightly, but both knew the bitterness behind her words. Andrea huffed and held her shoulders, "That is their own loss. They don't deserve someone as amazing and spectacular as you, especially that coward."

Kimberly patted her hands as thanks and smiled, "Yes, they don't..."

“And some experiences led to good things... you are still close friends with Junie, right?”

“Yes yes,” She guffawed, “One good thing that came from that relationship is Junie finally realizing his sexuality...”

Andrea sighed, “Like what mommy said, it’s like everyone who’s handsome is either taken or gay.”

Kimberly propped her chin on her hand and hummed, looking out the window as she thought aloud, “It just sucks because sometimes I catch myself thinking of *him*... and I don’t want to but I still miss him and want to be his friend.”

“Well, you’ve been friends first before anything... and for more than a decade so it is difficult to suddenly just cut ties off.” Andrea paused and gave Kimberly’s back a gentle stroke, “It’s difficult right now because you both just got out of your... very unique relationship, but in due time when you feel like you wouldn’t fawn over his words and little actions, then you both can be actual friends again.”

“Thank you... I know that deep in my heart but you know how it’s hard to accept that easily.” Kimberly sighed and rested her head on the desk. “I think I’ll take a short nap here before my next class.”

Andrea threw her a thumbs up and sauntered out the door, but before she left she snapped her fingers. “And you never know, love may be knocking on your door very soon.”

Kimberly snorted as she snuggled into her arm, “Yeah right.”

Love didn’t come knocking gently on her door (maybe, in a perfect heart-shaped life, he would be her new condo-unit neighbor who brought her favorite mocha cake as greetings). Instead, love knocked her project proposal papers right out of her hands and into the water fountain next to them.

And at that moment, she didn’t find love to be like love at all.



Just like anyone would, she screamed.

“I’m sorry!” The other man apologized purposely, already rolling up his pants and sleeves. Kimberly panicked, “What are you doing?!”

“I’m going to get your papers?” He tilted his head in question, fingers unbuttoning his cuffs as he folded his sleeves to his elbows.

“Why!” She exasperated, hands thrown into her hair.

“Because it seems to be very important for you!”

“It is important to me... when it was dry! You’ll just get yourself all wet trying to save tarnished paper!”

The man seemed to have malfunctioned for a moment, and Kimberly didn’t know if she would be endeared by the puppy-like trait or be annoyed by his illogical thought process.

She pinched the bridge of her nose, “Look, it’s alright. Accidents happen. I have my documents saved in my drive so I can just pri–”

“I can print them for you!” The boy jumped on his heels, “It’s the least I could do... and I already feel so bad for taking time off your day.”

While she felt that it would take much longer to have him tail around her, as she does have an important meeting soon, her good conscience tells her to give him a chance of making it up to her.

“You really don’t have to, but if you insist then I suppose there’s no stopping you.” She said flatly, looking down at her watch. “My building is to the south, and there’s a computer shop along the way so we can just make a stop there.”

The boy merely nodded and went to pick up his backpack that he had dropped beforehand, Kimberly caught a glimpse of what seemed to be face wash and gillette razor inside. Again, she didn’t know whether or not to be entertained or annoyed by how things are going out of schedule today.

Just as they were about to walk, she saw a familiar black-haired boy. Clad in the university’s green varsity jacket, he had the same distant and unapproachable aura surrounding him as he shifted through the music on his phone.

He seemed to have felt her stare as he looked up and his eyes widened slightly.

“Let’s go.” Kimberly murmured at the boy, walking towards the gate which the black-haired boy was entering from. He slowly brought down his headphones as the pair got closer, but Kimberly kept a straight face and merely brushed past him.

Feeling the wind between them, it felt like her heart was breaking all over again but she no longer had it in her to let him take up her midnights and sunsets anymore.

“Hi Kimberly.”

She bit her lip and nodded,

“Good to see you, Vernon.”

She felt him stop in his tracks but didn't bother to turn around to look at him. She quietly scanned her ID by the exit, feeling the puppy-like boy behind her.

"You know Vernon?" She tensed at his question and nodded, he pulled on a thoughtful expression and she couldn't help but ask, "How do you know him?"

"He was my classmate for general sports before but we didn't really get to talk much."

Kimberly pursed her lips, "What course are you in?"

"I'm an economics and performing arts major!" He grinned, and Kimberly's eyebrows raised in slight amazement. "Oh, I think you're the first person I've met who's double-degree too! I'm a psychology and business major."

The boy's eyes sparkled, "That's so cool! And it sounds like a lot of work."

"All courses are a lot of work," Kimberly paused and gave him a slight smirk, "Amongst the mishaps that may happen too."

The boy scratched behind his ear and chuckled nervously, "I'm really sorry about that." She nodded, "It's alright, I suppose that this also caused a delay in your day as well."

He was about to reply when they've reached the computer shop. It was a simple process of logging into her google cloud and loading up the file. The boy immediately paid for the papers and gaped at the content, "It's only freshman year and you already designed an application?"

Kimberly giggled, "Yes. It's called Thriftr and basically where you can trade your items! I even made a working application prototype for it."

"I thought you were a psychology and business major... but you're also really good in branding! I assume you made the logo and layout of everything too?"

Kimberly felt giddy with his comments and nodded excitedly, "It's a really enjoyable class. There was one activity when we also had to rebrand Tropical Hut, and I would like to say that my work was one of the best."

The boy handed her the papers with a smile, "Then you must show that to me next time."

She raised a brow at him and gave a cheeky smile, "So there's a next time, Mr. about-to-dive-into-the-water-to-save-papers?"

"Of course, Miss triple-or-even-more-degree-major." He looked down on his phone and gaped, "Shoot! I have dance practice in 10 minutes! I'll see you around!"

He was about to run to the studio when he turned his head towards her and grinned, "My name is Lee Chan, by the way. It was nice to meet you... even under these special circumstances."

Kimberly felt the wind brush against her, clutching the papers tightly against her chest and baby hairs straying over her face. She looked at him with doe eyes, seeing how his fringe moved slightly and how his eyes crinkled.

"I'm Kimberly Yu. Good luck with dance practice!"

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## 2ND YEAR

**Dear White Rabbit,**

*There are countless of stories with childhood bestfriends falling for each other but never being the endgame— and I think that's about to happen to me π π π. We've been the closest friends for 8 years, and to be completely honest, my feelings for him are on and off. We don't really get to talk or see each other everyday, probably once or twice a month at most. He's always been really nice and sweet; often asking me to eat out because he misses me. Recently, I was going through a hard week because of deadlines and exams, and he came to visit me even if it was really late and we couldn't eat anywhere at the mall. I'm not sure if I'm just putting more meaning into this or if there's really something different about how he's acting. This brings us to now; I would really like your advice about this and if you think I should try and pursue anything. I really don't want to ruin our friendship and he's been such a safe space for a long time, but my feelings for him continue to grow everyday.*

*Sincerely,*

*Troubled Chemist who has love chemistry with her bestfriend*

**Dear Troubled Chemist,**

*Oh my goodness. I just want to throw you out the window of how cute you're acting. It's always so delightful to listen to stories stemming from storge, or familial love which we usually get from either our families or friends. You're right that it is difficult for us to do a shift in our relationships with people, especially if it is from someone we've known for a long time. But, what is life without trying new experiences and taking risks? By how you described your relationship, he seems like a really great guy and cares a lot about you. If ever something does blossom between the two of you, your friendship won't just break easily— if it does then you might as well rethink how close you both really are.*

*Perhaps it would do you well to drop some hints or signs about your feelings and see if he acts on them. If he doesn't and you still want to pursue him, then you can start being bolder in your actions. Maybe if your love language is gift giving, bake him a cake or if it's acts of service then... still bake him a cake! I hope that this helped you decide on what you do, and let's manifest that love chemistry!*

*Fondly,*

*A Delighted White Rabbit*

"Did you get to read Love Catalyst today, Kimi?" Bea, one of Kimberly's friends sighed dreamily.

They were sitting across each other at the lunch room, waiting for their other friends to arrive so they can eat together. Kimberly almost spat out the water she had been drinking.

“Not yet, why?”

“It’s so sweet! A story about bestfriends~ hmm, maybe I should send in an entry about Edwin and I too!”

Kimberly chuckled, “But don’t people usually just send in an entry if they’re asking for advice?”

“Yes but I would like to think that whoever is behind the love column would like a breather sometimes!” Bea hummed and then perked up, “Speaking of which! How are things going with Wonwoo?”

Note to Kimberly’s future self: do not drink when Bea is around.

“It’s alright...”

Wonwoo had been a groupmate that was insanely handsome and intelligent. It didn’t help that only the both of them were working hard on their project while the others just weren’t the best in research and writing, but thankfully they were great at presenting so they managed to split the work evenly.

Surprisingly, Wonwoo had been the first to reach out to her to converse outside of class. Kimberly had honestly thought that he wasn’t interested in making friends because it seemed like everything he talked about previously was only about how her other classes were.

But then there came the questions about how she was, the good morning and evening greetings, and on good days– if she would like to meet for lunch.

“Aw, just alright?” Bea pouted, propping her chin on her palms as she swung her feet in anticipation. “Didn’t you guys eat together the other day?”

“We did...”

Although Wonwoo was close to Kimberly’s ideals in a man– tall, prince-like, over-achiever in academics, seemingly has his future put together, and has a good sense of fashion– not to mention what an eye candy he is, as time passes and from the times they shared together, she can’t help but feel that–

“He’s quite boring.”

“Oh.” Bea thought for a moment, “So all his character is outside and nothing is left on the inside?”

Kimberly laughed and shook her hand, "He does have personality... but maybe it just doesn't go well with mine."

The smaller girl pouted, "Well, that's fine! You'll meet much more people anyway. No rush... but I do want double dates soon."

At the mention of that, Kimberly felt a hand on her shoulder and she jolted. Bea glared at the person behind her who raised his hands in defense.

"Woah I didn't mean to surprise you."

Kimberly squinted her eyes and turned around, "Chan?"

"Oh so you do remember me." His eyes crinkled into a smile. At the back of Kimberly's mind, she took note of how he's still puppy-like.

"Made a very impactful first impression." Kimberly turned to Bea and gestured at the man, "He bumped into me and made my papers fall into the water fountain."

"What!"

"But I offered to print them!" Chan immediately remarked, and Kimberly giggled. "Not before he was literally about to dive into the water fountain though."

"What!"

"Only because you screamed and I acted on instinct!"

"A pretty illogical instinct~" Kimberly teased and Chan grew flustered. Bea watched the bickering between them and pursed her lips, an eyebrow raising slightly.

"Anyway, it was nice to see you! I actually have to run right now! I'll see you!" Chan said before he turned to Bea and waved, "And I hope you don't think so poorly of me, Kimberly's friend! Bye, enjoy your meals!"

Watching him speed off, Bea hummed, "He seems fun."

Kimberly shrugged, "I literally only met him once so I wouldn't really know... I'm actually surprised that he still remembers me."

"Oh Kimi, I'm pretty sure you also leave a big impression on people." Bea snickered.

"In any case," The taller started, "I'm not in a rush to get into a relationship yet... but Andrea and I could always still go on double dates with you."

Bea clasped her hands together, "Oh for sure! By the way did I get to tell you about..."





The journalism room was situated at a faculty building located at the back of the campus. There was a small garden to cross and the office was quite isolated from the rest of the campus. It didn't really help that there were ghosts or other supernatural stories about the premises.

But, it being secluded meant that it was easier for Kimberly to sneak in without any of her friends seeing. It felt like a double life since she never told anyone about this extra-curricular activity.

When she got to the room, it was fairly quiet and the lights were turned off. That was also one thing she liked about this position, usually, no one else was in the room and so it felt like she has her own little office.

In order to adhere to the messages of people, the page limits only 5 questions per day but on special occasions, it would be 10 questions. There's also a word-limit of 150 words minimum and 250 words maximum for the entries so whoever doesn't follow them, automatically gets rejected by the system.

Kimberly enjoyed learning more and more about different relationship hurdles but admits that most of the problems usually come from people falling for red flags (even though it's obvious) or allegations of cheating. Those are always the hardest to give advice to because there will always be one solution- breaking up.

Sure, there are others who'd rather stay in the toxic relationship to try and save it or the "I can fix him" personalities, but Kimberly can't stress it enough how people will not change if they don't want to.

As she finished writing to one of the Alices, this one in particular asked if there was something wrong with him for losing sparks whenever he and his on-and-off girlfriend would start an LDR cycle.

*Not everyone can handle being in a long-distance relationship. Sure, there may be a schedule you two may follow on going on calls but there are people who don't do well with routines.*

Kimberly paused in her typing and pondered.

*Perhaps you are more in love with the idea of being in a relationship than your partner herself, or you are just not meant for an LDR cycle. It all boils down to you having a serious talk with her, and to address this. Should you leave the relationship, state it clearly and do not lead her on.*

Feeling shivers up her spine, her mind pictured a tall and slender man with a wolfish grin. One that was so in love with the thought of her but not the real her. It definitely led to a lot of uncomfortable conversations and eventually losing the friendship.

*I believe that things in life happen for a reason. Maybe you were both not meant for this lifetime, or maybe you'll have a second shot at it again. But, you must also be wise about your decisions so as to not have any regrets.*

Kimberly also can't help but feel for these people who write for her because, at the end of the day, all of these are happening in real life. Everyone has their own sets of problems but we continue to live out our days and make the most out of it.

*Whichever path you decide to take is your own, Alice. While it is good to talk your thoughts out with others, never let them dictate what you should do. Best of my luck, my dear, and I hope that you will hold no disappointment with your choice.*

As she signed it off, a ping went off on her phone. She looked at the notification bell and saw that it was a friend request from Lee Chan.

Staring at it for a moment, she sighed thoughtfully.

"No regrets, huh?" She murmured to herself before she clicked accept.

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### 3RD YEAR

Monday blues.

Everyone gets them—workers, students, and even stay-at-home people just because the notion is so widespread in social media anyway.

The blue-cladded girl tries not to let the negative feelings consume her as she gets dressed for work, and even prepared a chocolate chip cookie as her pick-me-up for the morning.

While her OJT was generally calm, safe for the events that she had to organize, as she was tasked to answer emails and file out documents, having to juggle it with school work did keep her on her toes. But, she was thankful that she had a co-intern that was also studying.

She was immediately greeted by the staff as she got in, plastering on a smile even if the face mask covered it, and waved at everyone. She sat in her assigned cubicle and noticed that her co-intern was already starting his job.

"Good morning, Ruiz~"

Ruiz stared at her for a moment.

"Do you want to get coffee?"

Kimberly looked unimpressed but also laughed internally because he always came up with the randomest of thoughts.

“Ruiz, I don’t drink coffee.”

“Mhmm...”

“You also don’t drink coffee.”

“I’m not hearing a no.”

She sighed, eyes flitting to the analog and guessed that they had a little bit of time for a coffee run.

“Fine, let’s go to Starbucks.”

Ruiz cheered while Kimberly shook her head fondly at him. They quickly trekked to the cafe and Ruiz spent some time asking the barista for their recommendation as he didn’t know which coffee to get while Kimberly ordered her usual chocolate chip frappuccino.

Once Ruiz finally got his receipt he furrowed his brows, “There’s a man who’s been staring at you.”

“What? Where?”

“Behind you... damn he kinda a hunk.”

“Quick, walk towards me and I’ll follow you so I can turn around.”

Acting it out, Kimberly caught sight of a tall figure with a killer smile. Ruiz turned around again with his eyes wide, “I think he’s also working at the company!”

“Where did you see him?”

“I was snooping in the other rooms but I also see him in the break room sometimes.”

They were both broken out of their bubble when the barista called out their names. Kimberly couldn’t help but look back to see that the tall figure was still looking at them.

“Maybe he’s into me.” Ruiz joked and Kimberly chuckled, pushing him by the shoulder lightly as they stepped out of the cafe.

“Maybe he’s attracted to your guns.” She played along, laughing when Ruiz jokingly flexed his arms.



In the afternoon, she got “down time” and decided to visit the break room to refill her water bottle.

One thing she liked about the company she’s working for was that their main branding color was blue, which meant that the interior design is catered to that color palette.

Usually, there would be a couple of people by the blue couches, having their packed lunches but this time there was only one person– and that was the same man she saw earlier at the cafe.

He seemed like he was only about to start his meal, different tupperwears of food in front of him. She walked straight to the water dispenser and started to refill her water.

The glugging noises of the dispenser resonated around the room. Kimberly never thought that the area was quiet before as there was always some ambient background music playing, but even now with the fairly large sized room, she could hear the man’s breathing.

“Oh Kimberly, there you are!” She heard her supervisor’s jolly voice chime in. With every click clack of her heels, it felt like the sound of the world was returning.

“I was just going to ask you to look at some more files for me...” Her supervisor trailed off, looking around the room–

“Oh Mingyu! You’re there!” She clapped her hands together, gesturing for Kimberly to follow her. It felt like the moment when a mother would introduce her child to her friend’s child.

“Mingyu, this is Kimberly Yu. One of our new interns. Kimberly, this is Kim Mingyu, he’s a fresh graduate and started working for us only this month.”

He smiled widely, “It’s nice to meet you!” Kimberly politely nodded and smiled in reply.

“Anyway, as I was saying–”

Later by 4pm, when Kimberly was packing up her belongings, she noticed how she might have misplaced her water bottle. Figuring that she probably left it by the water dispenser since her supervisor suddenly came, she was about to go fetch it.

“Kimi, someone’s here to see you.”

She turned to the door and there stood Mingyu, holding out her water bottle with a grin.

Kimberly unintentionally looked over at Ruiz by her side who held a palm to his lips.

Breaking out of the trance she was in, she went towards him.

“Thank you so much. You didn’t have to go out of your way for this!”

Mingyu merely handed her the water bottle but kept his grasp on it, she looked up at him in confusion.

“Well, then, maybe you can go out of your way too and have lunch with me sometime?”

Kimberly could already feel Ruiz screaming from his seat, and she gave a slight smirk. Straightening her posture and pulled the water bottle from him.

“It won’t be out of my way if I actually want to join you.” She tutted, enjoying the way Mingyu’s face lit up.

“Alright, then I’ll be sure to pack a lunch for you tomorrow, Kimberly.” He winked at her before heading off. Kimberly had about a second of peace before her co-intern proceeded to shake her by the shoulders.

**Dear White Rabbit,**

*In matters of picking between friends and love, what would you choose? I’ve been having a quandary with my friend group about, yes you guessed it, my relationship. I will be honest and say that alright, we are more of a PDA couple– that is, being in our own bubble even when we’re hanging out with the group and in some instances, sharing a few embraces and kisses here and there. Our friends did confront us about it and now we don’t even acknowledge each other to the point where they think we’re fighting. For the cherry on top, they’ve also been going out on trips by themselves without inviting us because they assume that we’d be busy together. I’m not sure how to approach this, and could really use a helping hand. I don’t want to have to choose between the two of them because this is the first time I’ve ever loved someone this much and my friends have been my rock throughout my college life.*

*Sincerely,*

*Exasperated Strawberry who just wants peace in her social life*

**Dear Exasperated Strawberry,**

*For the lack of better terms, please keep it in your pants. While there is no problem about showing your affection to the one you love, there are still boundaries to it when you’re outside and on a friend outing. You must talk to your friends about this because from how I’m seeing it, there are unresolved issues with both sides. Talk and find a compromise. Perhaps they have other problems about the both of you that they need to let out, and you must also be honest with how you are feeling left out by them.*

*For your first question, we find different types of love with our friends and partner. For your friends, you feel philia or affectionate love. For your partner, you feel eros or romantic love, which focuses more of physical affection and passion. It is important to have these types of love present in our lives... but if you are asking whom we should give more time and attention to, it would be your partner. While your friends are there as your support system and people you can run to, your partner will be that and so much more. They will be the person you’ll come home to everyday and who you’ll spend your forevermore with. As cheesy*

*as it may sound, they are your home as much as you are theirs. So, my dear, be sure to talk this out with your friends and partner to ensure that you are all on the same page.*

*Fondly,*

*A Thoughtful White Rabbit*

What followed after was a series of packed lunches and break-room hangouts. Kimberly found that Mingyu was pleasant company, and with his scrumptious cooking and tender smiles, it was difficult to not fall for him– even for a moment.

“Our OJT will be over soon.” Ruiz started as they waited for their coffee (well, his choice of coffee for the day while Kimberly got her usual).

He continued, “Do you think that you’ll still get to spend your noons with him?”

A simple question calls for a simple answer.

“No.”

Ruiz nodded his head in understanding, “He does seem like the type to have to always see his companion everyday.”

“More like a doting-mother type for sure.”

“Yes, and you need your independency–”

“For Chan!” The barista’s voice caught Kimberly’s attention, and she perked up upon hearing the name. She saw the puppy-like boy and called out, “Chan!”

He startled, turning to her and immediately broke out in the wide grin. “Oh Kimberly! What are you doing here?”

“I work at the building next door... what about you?”

“Oh! For internship? Me too! But my company’s building is a few streets away, I just stopped by here for my coffee run.”

Kimberly nodded, “Well I don’t want to keep you!”

Chan waved his hand, “Yeah! I’ll see you in campus soon, Miss double-degree!”

She giggled, “I could say the same for you Mr. double-degree!”

He chuckled and lifted his cup up in cheers before leaving. Ruiz watched them and hummed, “I wonder.”

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## 4TH YEAR

With it being a new year, Kimberly had decided to spice things up just a little and joined another organization. At the prospect of getting into TIGER, which was put together to help freshmen be acquainted to the university in a sequence of campus tours, assemblies, and other activities, she didn't think that she'd enjoy it to the point of wanting to be a core member.

Admittedly so, in the beginning when her fuel tank was still full, she was able to churn out proposal after proposal of projects they can do while elevating her social life. But, as the term goes by and there would be more academic requirements to do, her orgmates were not ones to balance their time management efficiently. And so, it brought her to do extra work for the organization while still having to maintain her GPA, thus leading to the lack of sleep.

She napped multiple times during the day at the journalism office and was thankful that her parents had extended her curfew to 7pm everyday so she was able to continue her work on campus. Of course, that meant that she had to be asleep by 10pm. It was difficult to adjust at first but she eventually got used to it and focused on doing well in her work.

Speaking of napping in the office, at this time, Andrea had memorized her schedule and so visited the room at the moment she was up and ready to start working.

The smaller peeked her head in and grinned mischievously. Kimberly already knew from that expression that something was up.

"As you know, Love Catalyst has been a development from our university that gained the attention of the media as it was such a *trivial* thing to have but it proved to be useful and practiced having good communication and not being scared of sharing." Andrea started, stepping into the room and shutting it behind her.

"But we both know too that people are just *chismosa* and want to hear juicy love stories." She smirked, "That's beside the point... anyway, because it's receiving more interaction and popularity, the university gave us the go signal to have an issue published about this organization!"

Kimberly's eyes widened in response, "What? Really? That's great!"

"The great thing too is that we have full creative freedom for it! The zine will be about the whole journalism organization but our section would be the headliner." Andrea sat down on the roly chair and spun around, "The head of publications will be sending interview questions and we'll answer them through a document since no one is allowed to know who's behind Love Catalyst. But, we will be meeting him too since he'll show us what he wants the layout of the issue to look like." She paused and snapped her fingers, "Oh, and he knows that we both work with White Rabbit, but he doesn't know that we know who it is."

“Got it. It’s going to be so fun... and exciting!”

Andrea hummed, “And you’re still good right? Not too burned out with everything going on?”

Kimberly’s shoulders sagged a little, “I’m enjoying everything that I’m doing, but sometimes I wish for more hours in the day because I miss being able to hang out with my circle. It’s tough but seeing my hard work pay off at the end of the day helps a lot.”

“And I just want you to remember that we are all proud of what you’re doing, even if you are busy, if you need to take a breather, we are always here for you.” Andrea rolled over towards her and hugged her from the chair.

“If you need to take a break, just tell me, and we can make something up like White Rabbit and the Mad Hatter is having tea time and would be back.”

Kimberly squeezed her once, “No, it’s okay. I can still do it. This work doesn’t even feel like work and I’m genuinely fond of the Alices too.”

“Alright.”

Knocks came about the door, and they both answered with a “Come in!”

A curly-haired boy stepped in and he was stunned to see a couple of girls on roly chairs sharing a hug.

“Oh, is this not a good time?”

“No, you’re fine. We just finished discussing.” Andrea chuckled, patting Kimberly’s back one last time before rolling towards him.

The boy seemed to be flabbergasted by the whole exchange but didn’t express it. Later on, they learned that his name was David and that this was his last project to work on before he resigns. He made a small passing comment that the press corps’ room was quite crowded. Sharing a look, the two ladies offered the room as a place to stay and work to which he was very grateful and shy for.

“You’re placing a lot of trust in me. What if I was a kleptomaniac?” He joked, and Kimberly laughed.

“We’d like to think that we’re good at reading people and you already feel like someone we’d get along finely with.”

“And if you steal anything, then we’d just report you. Obviously.” Andrea scoffed jokingly.

David chuckled and his eyes sparkled, “Well it’s a good thing I never planned to. It’s nice to meet you both!”



**Dear White Rabbit,**

Lately I've been feeling lost. I met whom seemed to be a lovely boy and for a time, we hit it off well. Whereas we didn't have a lot of similar interests, we both do our best to listen and support each other. I admit that I may have fell for him a little early in our "friendship", and I foolishly hoped for a "she fell first but he fell harder" sort of thing. But, this leads us to my predicament now. Our "romantic relationship" lasted for a span of 2 weeks to which after he told me he didn't really like me but was just infatuated with the thought of dating.

While other people might be able to let this go, I just can't. It's been 3 months and I'm still hung up about him and I miss him. I'm scared to think that what I felt for him was love, but he made me feel so unsure about myself and whether or not I am able to be a good partner to anyone now. He said a lot of awful things in his breakup letter and it still haunts me until today. I did write a reply but I have not been able to send it... do you think I should? Everything feels like it's underwater and I just want to be able to breathe again.

Sincerely,

Blind Artist desperately looking for answers

**Dear Blind Artist,**

Oh dear... I have a little analogy for you. Love is either fire or water. While some people prefer fiery love with all the passion and intensity, and all the sparks at the beginning of the relationship- the flame slowly dies down the longer it goes. But, water is still and runs even if we don't expect it to. Sure, there are times when the waves make everything feel unstable, but it calms down after a while. With water, the relationship might feel shallow at first but the longer you go, the deeper it goes and you both have to be there to not let yourselves drown.

With your relationship, you wanted water but he was fire. Naturally, if you mix both then you both die. You dived in too early and he sparked too quickly... this all happened in 2 weeks. It really isn't good for you to stay in this kind of process where you pour your all but they don't reciprocate. And I could see how this scars you- in a way that you feel like you aren't meant to love.

My dear, even the most confident of people have days wherein they feel lost too. On your grounds, I believe that you need time to be by yourself and to learn what you deserve because you shouldn't let yourself be fired on just to be let down later- philautia or self love is what I would like for you to work on as it will surely do you good whether or not you'll find yourself in a relationship or not in the future.

Finally, regarding your question about the letter, since it has been 3 months then- it might be best to leave it be. There are things we express through writing, but there are also some things that should be kept secret for our own sake. I hope that things look up for you and that you find your solace.

Fondly,

A Wistful White Rabbit

For a moment, Kimberly felt reflective in her own words. Once in a blue moon, she would come up with these analogies, and each time, it felt like she was also talking to herself and the situation of her life now. With all the previous relationships, it seemed like fire to her. She wanted water but why is it that fire was all that came to her?

Perhaps it was that because, in this part of her life, she doesn't have the time to balance a relationship yet. Maybe after a month or two, she'd have met someone who can give her the attention and love she deserves. Or maybe she has already met him but just didn't see him as that figure in her life yet.

"Kimberly, hi!"

She snapped out of her thoughts as she saw a... pink haired boy walk towards her.

"Chan?" she gaped, seeing the boy pull out the seat in front of her. He smiled tenderly and brought down his own laptop on the table.

She had wanted a change of scenery and decided to stay at the cafe inside the library so that she could munch on a croissant while creating pubmats for TIGER. While she wanted this time to be alone, she had to admit that she didn't mind the company of the other.

Especially with how... attractive he looked in his new hairdo.

"When did you dye your hair?" She quipped, the other sat down and grinned cutely.

"Do you like it? I had to dye it last night for an upcoming performance and I thought it wouldn't suit me but I think it looks quite nice!"

Kimberly honestly wanted to squish him to death by how cute he looked but she worried that would get her kicked out of the library so instead she nodded and bit her baked good (definitely not imagining that it was Chan's cheek).

That reaction was enough for Chan to spring onto a small talk of how she was before telling some updates about his own life and even queried her about interests or things she wanted to do— *and god, it was an actual conversation.*

After a while, he sat quietly as he opened his laptop to do his own work. Usually, silence with other people made them feel awkward but that wasn't the case for him at all, and it certainly wasn't for Kimberly either. As she took a peek at him from behind her iPad, she thought that *she could definitely get used to this.*

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## 5TH YEAR

Senior year, aka what will be the death of her as she tries to balance her thesis, org, and social life. While most people would usually give up their org work to focus on their academics, Kimberly applied for the highest position in TIGER in hopes to address all the issues she had while working in her previous section.

This also helped her keep her perfectionist skill at bay and practiced her organizational capabilities. Now her work consists of checking or approving work, giving advice, and making sure that everything runs smoothly. Truthfully, it seemed that the job got lighter for her.

But, since it was also her thesis year, the workload in general still balanced itself. That and the thought of becoming an actual adult soon settled on her shoulders as she watched some of her friends graduate and apply for jobs.

She decided that she'd cross that bridge once she gets there and continues to do her best in her current commitments. Speaking of which, she was happy with how the publication for Love Catalyst was going.

They had to review White Rabbit's letters back, which David was pretty excited about, where he learned that it usually identifies types of love- which is what the whole issue will express more of. Kimberly agreed to this as she doesn't really have the platform to discuss it further and it was a nice direction.

"Have you ever wondered what Love Catalyst stands for?" Andrea gave a Cheshire grin to which David tilted his head.

"I did but I never got the answer."

Andrea looked at Kimberly and pursed her lips, urging for her to explain. Kimberly was more than happy to.

"A catalyst is something that provokes or speeds up a significant change."

"So a love catalyst would mean that it's how your actions let you experience the types of love?" David wondered aloud. Kimberly gave him a happy nod.

"Exactly! So for example, self-love is catalyzed by the soul since it's intrapersonal... and it goes on."

"That's so interesting." David paused, his eyes wide. "We can definitely have this be the beginning since it explains the name of your column."

Kimberly clapped her hands excitedly, "That would be wonderful!"

"I thought of an ending~" Andrea trailed, an imaginary tail would be wagging behind her as she swung her legs from the chair.

"Yes, there are different types of love but we never got around to discussing how these types can be combined and there are combos for friendship, significant others, and family." She continued with a hum, "I think it would be a nice flow as it also gives story-telling."

David's eyes sparkled, "We can do that! Let's have some feature letters that show off each type so that readers will be able to get into the feeling more."

And that brings Kimberly to her current predicament- there are two more types of love missing but Andrea assured her to not worry about the other one. She doesn't know what her best friend is scheming but she trusts her.

Though she can't really dwell on it for a long time as she has lots of responsibilities, she feels that the usual problem of couples nowadays are that their partners simply have no time for them- which, for the lack of a better term, sucks.

She just finished reading another letter wherein the Alice is having trouble figuring out if they have feelings for their friend or if they were just lonely- not understanding a healthy romantic relationship as they grew up in a loveless household, when she got a ping.

**Dear White Rabbit,**

*It is a pleasure to finally have the time and confidence to write to you. For the longest time, I've held affection towards a lady I've no close relations with. We met during freshman year through an unfortunate accident but she was kind enough to indulge me. I thought that I would be able to forget about her but just as I was, every year it felt that the universe wanted me to see her. A cafe, on social media, the library- it was all too coincidental.*

*At first, I knew I had a crush on her because of her aura and how she reacted even with our poor first interaction (and of course, she was just so beautiful). But now my feelings have grown as we occasionally catch each other on campus or have conversations over the web (and god, she's just perfect).*

*I'm uncertain if I should make the first move- we are now both in our senior years and I fear that it may be too late to start anything. At the very least, I would still want to tell her how I feel. This may not sound like much of a problem, but I could really use your help.*

*Sincerely,*

*Pink Otter that wants to dance with the blue butterfly*

Reading over it, Kimberly felt color brighten her disposition. She tasted something sweet on her tongue and her fingers twitched as she typed out a reply.

**Dear Pink Otter,**

*I'm so glad that you've reached out to me; I know how hard it is to open up to people- especially if they are strangers. Allow me to let you in on something- there is no right time for anything. While most people would say "the time wasn't right", that is merely an excuse or an*

*alternative for the answer "I am not ready". Think of it as how you handle your commitments right now, you're able to put your heart into them because you are ready for them. Commitments in life and love are not entirely different, my dear.*

*This leads me to my point of pragma or enduring love, which means that you are standing in love rather than falling, which is really fascinating to me. Usually, people wouldn't experience being dedicated to someone they barely know but by how you described it, it feels very sincere. Whoever they are seem like they wouldn't do anything awful to you, and confessing is also able to set your head straight.*

*So, go and tell her how you feel- be simple, be extravagant, be what you genuinely are. A piece of advice though, do not push them for an answer and wait for however they react. I would say that a good sign is if their eyes crinkle into a smile. I wish you to have that dance with the blue butterfly and for all good things.*

*Fondly,*

*An Enthusiastic White Rabbit*

Kimberly let her back fall against the chair, a pensive look in her eyes.



It seemed like deja vu when Kimberly saw him again- except this time, he wasn't just a clumsy and in-a-hurry freshman. Instead, there sat a pink-haired senior, double-degree with a great smile and even greater heart. His eyes are closed as he let the sun hit his cheeks.

Kimberly brushed imaginary dust from her blue dress as she sat next to him, tucking her hair behind her ear and biting back a smile.

Chan slowly opened his eyes, gaze locking on Kimberly's figure and he sat there- staring for a moment.

"Well aren't you going to say something?" Kimberly teased, pushing her glasses up as she stared in front of her- mindful that he was still looking at her.

It took another minute of silence before Kimberly gave in and turned to him.

Then, he smiled- so handsomely and tenderly.

"Would you like to spend the afternoon with me?"

Kimberly smiled brilliantly and hummed, "What will we do?"

"Anything you'd like- but let's have lunch first."

Instead of replying, she simply held his hand and pulled him up. "I'm craving for some sashimi."

Chan chuckled, stopping to properly lace their fingers together and locked their gazes. "I know just the place."

Kimberly felt her cheeks burn by her smile, eyes crinkling and rolled her eyes fondly at him.

"By the way, have I ever mentioned how beautiful your butterfly clips are?"

"Just my butterfly clips?"

"Well—" Chan paused, "You're what makes them beautiful."

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**Dear Alices,**

*For the years Love Catalyst has been up, there's no doubt that this column has brought not only entertainment but guidance to you. When this was started, we never imagined it to blow up as much as it did— and that is all thanks to you.*

*However, I would also like to take this time to thank our dear White Rabbit who has spent time reading over everyone's letters and carefully choosing the words that will best aid you. You all may wonder if there are any gifts or benefits upon working on this column— there are none. Everyone behind the Love Catalyst takes time out of their days to be able to give you the love and care you deserve. But the one who poured the most love is White Rabbit, and with the highest type— agape or selfless love.*

*Our Alices, love will come into your life disguised in many things and meaning many things. How you go about your life is entirely up to you— no matter what advice is thrown to you, your decision is what you should follow because it is yours. We are here for you when you need an ear to listen to and when you would like to know what others think with no judgement of who you are or what has happened.*

*It has been an honor to speak with and get to know you all even if it is through letters, and I hope that you all will be well in your endeavors whether it is just finding the energy to start the day or reaching a milestone. This has been the Love Catalyst, and this is just the start of our journey together.*

*With sincere gratitude,  
Mad Hatter*

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***Dedicated and written for my life's joy and my soul's love,  
Kimberly***

***All the love as always,  
Andrea***

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