

## Bitter Truth

\*Tiara\*

The day was weird, lled with an odd sense of unease, but encountering that man, X, twice in one day made it even weirder. Exhausted from the strangeness of it all, I nally arrived home, only to witness a harrowing sight. Hybrid maa men were at my house as their nefarious intentions were evident and they were viciously assaulting my defenseless father.

"No, stay away from him!" I yelled, my voice trembling with a mix of fear and anger as I rushed toward my father, desperately attempting to shield him from their brutal assault. "Why are you tormenting my dad when we have faithfully repaid the loan money?"

"We haven't received a single penny, and the debt remains unpaid," one of the maa henchmen retorted, a contemptuous sneer marring his face.

"You and your father are nothing but deceitful cheaters. Spare us your excuses. Your father's life is forfeit, and as for you, my dear, we'll gladly sell you in the market to recoup our losses." Their boss bared his teeth, his anger surged, and his eyes morphed into an ominous shade of red. With a menacing stride, he closed in on me, the threat hanging heavily in the air.

However, just as despair threatened to consume me, a commanding voice reverberated through the room, halting the impending chaos.

"Keep your hands off her and take a few steps back."

I turned my head and spotted X standing resolutely at the door, his gaze locked onto the imposing gures of the hybrid Maa members. The intensity in his eyes sent shivers down my spine as if he possessed an inner re ready to consume anyone who dared to challenge him.

"Who the f\*\*k are you threatening us?" the boss growled, his voice dripping with malice as he lunged forward, hurling his massive st toward X with violent intent.

In a display of graceful agility, X effortlessly evaded the boss's attack. I watched him in awe as his movements were so uid and precise. With lightning speed, he retaliated, his clenched st connecting with the boss's torso, sending him hurtling through the air until he collided with the wall in the farthest corner of our modest home. The impact echoed through the room, despite its cramped dimensions.

"You dare to mess with me!" X's voice boomed, lled with an undeniable authority that made others shrink back, their fear etched on their faces as they instinctively took a step away from him, clearing a path.

As X closed in on the boss, his presence seemed to command the space around him, emanating a domineering aura that brooked no deance. The boss, though bruised and disoriented, managed to muster enough courage to meet X's gaze. Sweat trickled down his forehead as he stood in front of this formidable adversary.

"Listen, you pathetic leech!" X declared, clenching his jaw as his tone was colder than the winter wind. "I will pay you the entire money, but on one condition. Take your men and get out of here, never to lay eyes on this family again."

What?!

Why would he pay for our loan money?!

"Wait, we don't need you..." I began to protest, but X swiftly raised a commanding hand, silencing me before I could nish my sentence.

"Let me handle this, Tiara," he asserted with unwavering authority.

His interference left me dumbfounded as if he believed he had the right to take charge.

With a swift display of power, X compelled the entire hybrid Maa to vacate our house immediately. As they departed, X followed them, leaving me inside to assist my father. I helped him up, offering him water and comforting words. Through the slightly ajar door, I caught a glimpse of X calmly writing out a check to settle the matter. After a while, X returned.

"They won't bother you ever again," he assured us, his voice carrying a sense of nality.

"Thank you so much, young man," my father expressed his gratitude sincerely.

X nodded, acknowledging my father's appreciation. However, a lingering confusion remained within me, clouding my thoughts.

Lost in contemplation, I muttered, "But I don't understand... If we've already paid them, why did they come back?"

X's expression turned solemn.

"Tiara, you still haven't grasped the truth," he stated, his voice tinged with a mixture of concern and certainty. "Your friends—the boy you're with at school and the girl you walk in the market—are involved in this scam together."

My breath caught in my throat, stunned by his revelation.

"I don't know what you're talking about, but Shirley is my best friend, and Jeremy is my boyfriend. Why would they do anything to me?" I countered with confusion and a hint of defensiveness.

X smirked cunningly, his eyes gleaming with a mixture of amusement and superiority.

"You don't believe me, right?!" he taunted, his tone dripping with smugness.

Frowning, I crossed my arms, feeling a surge of frustration building within me.

"Come with me," he ordered, reaching out to grab my hand.

His touch sent unexpected sparks coursing through my veins, making me feel those strange sensations again. I tried to pull my hand away, summoning every ounce of strength to resist him. But he didn't release my hand.

"I can't leave my father. He's hurt," I protested, my voice tinged with concern.

"Don't worry. My people will take care of him and get him to the hospital. But if you want to see the real faces of your friends, you need to be somewhere else," he assured me, his tone reassuring yet insistent.

I allowed him to guide me into his car. He got behind the wheel and drove us to an unknown destination, the engine humming softly as the scenery passed by in a blur.

Eventually, the car came to a halt in front of Shirley's apartment complex. X turned to face me, his eyes lled with intensity.

"Go and nd who is with your best friend in her apartment," he advised, making me furrow.

"Don't worry. I am here and no one can harm you," he assured me in his deep cold voice as if he sensed the nervousness in my heart.

Confusion still clouded my mind, but an inexplicable force seemed to guide my legs as they moved on their own accord toward Shirley's apartment.

I stopped in front of her door, my hand poised to knock when I discovered that the door was ajar. Inside, I saw Shirley and Jeremy, both naked. Shirley was sitting on top of him.

"Umm... Jeremy! You make me feel so good," Shirley moaned, throwing her head back while bouncing on top of my boyfriend.

"Babe, I still feel sorry for Tiara. We should give her a cut of this money. After all, we got it by selling her virginity," Jeremy's words resonated through the door, accompanied by his callous laughter.

My heart sank, and anger surged within me. My best friend and my boyfriend were together, betraying me for who knows how long.

"Oh, baby. Don't talk about her while we're making love!" The words uttered by my supposed best friend, Shirley, struck me like a dagger through the heart. "She's nothing more than a pathetic example of a human. We were born to use her and become rich," Shirley's cruel declaration echoed in my ears, shattering my trust in an instant.

"She doesn't even know that her father transferred all the money to my account," Jeremy confessed, his revelation hitting me with a devastating force. My hand instinctively ew to my mouth, stliing the gasp that threatened to escape.

"Babe, you cleverly changed the account details with mine. Tiara trusted you implicitly," Jeremy groaned as Shirley rode him faster.

Shirley's shameless laughter reverberated in my ears like molten lava.

"However, she's still a virgin, and that gives us the perfect opportunity to sell her again," she giggled unabashedly, kissing my cheating boyfriend. "I'm sure I can easily convince her to sell herself once more."

Shirley's words cut through me like a knife, sending waves of nausea crashing over me.

"That's why I love you so much, babe. You're a cunning b\*\*\*h," Jeremy growled as he shifted their positions, placing Shirley beneath him and entering her abruptly, thrusting roughly. Their moans and groans lled the space, leaving me with a sick feeling in my stomach.

How could someone be so heartless, so devoid of empathy? I had placed my utmost trust in them, considering them closer than anyone else in the world, only to be met with this unimaginable betrayal.

My mind raced with a mix of anger, hurt, and a seething desire for revenge. I wanted to confront them, to make them feel the weight of their despicable actions. But deep down, I knew it would be futile. They were shameless and cunning, immune to the impact of my words.

My best friend and boyfriend were together and they were using me for their selsh motive. What could be more heartbreaking? I turned away from her doorstep, leaving behind the toxicity that had tainted our friendship. As I made my way back outside the building, I found X waiting for me, his back leaning against his car.

"What happened?!" X asked, frowning as his eyes darkened dangerously. He reached out to wipe away the tears staining my cheeks.

"Did they do something to you?!" He asked in a murderous tone.

Tingles erupted again when his ngers caressed my cheeks.

However, it was at that moment that I realized I had been crying, my heart broken and shattered into countless pieces, my trust trampled under their feet.

"Nothing. It's just..." I paused to take a deep breath, "...witnessing the bitter truth is heart-wrenching," I confessed, my voice shaky as I snied and tried to wipe my eyes dry.

X's expression grew serious as he revealed, "The guy, Jeremy, works for the Hybrid Maa."

Surprised, I snapped back, "How do you know?"

"I made inquiries when I found out you were with him," he revealed, his gaze unwavering and peering deep into mine.

Frustration mingled with confusion. I looked up at him, searching for honesty and truth in his eyes.

"Why are you doing all of this? What do you want?" I questioned, my voice quivering with both desperation and a hint of vulnerability.

"Tiara, you already know what I want," he replied without hesitation. He shifted closer, looking deep into my eyes before continuing, "But if you need to hear it from my lips again, then I'll confess it once more: I want you."

I sucked a breath at the intensity of his gaze. However, there was no emotion in his tone.

"Tiara, I want you to be by my side and I am ready to pay any price for it," he said, and his voice was desperate, vibrating with mixed emotions. My heart sank upon realization.

He was smart enough to know that I could never repay such an enormous sum, leaving me with no choice but to be with him. Still conicted, I dgeted with my ngers, pondering the consequences of accepting or refusing him.

X gently tucked a nger under my chin, lifting my gaze to meet his eyes.

"Tiara, don't be afraid of me. I will never hurt you," he declared, gazing at me possessively, which weirdly made me feel safe. I was now more confused.

"But why do you want me to be by your side?" I insisted because he could get any girl he wanted. Then why me?!

"You'll know when the time comes," he said, his tone serious and icy and his gaze piercing into the depths of my soul.