

## Whispered Goodbye Chapter 01

5:30 AM.

I returned home from the market and started preparing the fresh-cooked congee Leo Sterling wanted.

He'd been working late these past few days, usually getting back from the lab around 2 or 3 AM.

Seeing the fatigue in his eyes, my heart softened and I agreed to make it.

The bone broth in the clay pot came to a boil.

I stirred the congee base every half hour. By 7 AM, it was smooth and creamy.

Another half hour passed, and Leo got up.

He sat at the table and took a photo of the congee. His long fingers moved swiftly, sending it to someone unknown.

"How does it taste?" I asked, watching his actions, my heart tightening.

His soft bangs slightly covered his beautiful eyes, his straight back exuding youthful freshness.

"Delicious," he said, his eyes crinkling.

I smiled too, but my voice was bitter: "Is that so?"

Leo and I have been in the North for almost ten years now, studying and working.

But he still maintains the exacting palate for food that most people from South Bay have.

Best restaurants near me

In our junior year of college, we moved out of the dorms and rented a place off-campus.

I learned to cook, finally managing to put some meat on the bones of the skinny, malnourished Leo.

My reminiscing was interrupted by a phone call.

Leo's bland expression instantly came alive when he answered.

A sweet voice came through: "Senior, are you up? I brought you breakfast!"

My nails dug into my palm as my heart felt like it was being strangled by a rope.

I couldn't breathe.

The speaker was Jade Kingsley, Leo's junior in the same research group.

At first, I heard him complain about how clumsy Jade was.

Now, he willingly helps her with experiments and puts her name first on papers.

All in just half a year.

"You're there early, considering how late we were in the lab last night. Just leave the breakfast there, I'll come have it later," Leo said, his tone indulgent to the extreme.

With that, he hurriedly got up.

"It's too hot. I'm not eating. I'm in a rush," he said coldly, standing up.

I looked him straight in the eye: "I spent over an hour making it."

We live only 5 minutes from the lab. What's he rushing for?

A flash of annoyance crossed Leo's eyes: "If it's such a bother, don't make it anymore."

I watched him leave in a daze.

Suddenly, I felt utterly pathetic for getting up so early to cook for him.

My wisdom tooth had been hurting for a few days.

My best friend, Tori Justice, messaged me: "Rare to have a weekend off. Want to play ball this afternoon?" "Not sure, I need to see a dentist."

“Isn’t your Dr. Sterling doing his post–doc in dentistry? Shouldn’t he have taken care of this for you already?” My fingers froze over the keyboard.

A week ago, I told Leo my wisdom tooth might be coming in and it hurt.

After a long delay, he replied saying to find time to come to his department.

But when I took half a day off to see him, I found an empty office.

That night, he explained that his junior had an issue with an experiment, and he went back to help.

We’d been in a cold war for days after that.

Until last night, when he came home looking exhausted and said he wanted my congee.

I had been hopeful, thinking it was his way of making up.

Now I see how foolish that was.