Chapter 1: Share and Read Together

A white bicycle and a long-haired 25-year-old woman stopped at a small newspaper stand in front of the fresh market. Her large, bright eyes fixed on the books hanging above the stall. The cover showed the hero and heroine of a popular drama leaning their heads together on a four-color cover. Below on the wooden board were just a few remaining daily newspapers.

Her long hair swayed as her mischievous eyes scanned around, hoping to find something more.

She looked inside the row of shophouses, part of which sold groceries. The owner came out just then. A woman about fifty years old smiled from afar, stepped forward and stopped beside the stall, asking,

“What would you like, dear?”

“Do you have any other books, aunty?”

“Well, I only have what you see here. They only delivered this much. The new newspapers have to wait until tomorrow morning.”

“Oh... that’s too bad.”

“What kind of books are you looking for?”

The young woman lowered her head and smiled, turning her bicycle around and heading another way. Before leaving, she turned back and asked the shop owner,

“Aunty, how many bookstores are there in this district?”

“There are three. One across the market, and another one near the transport office.”

“Uh... which of these sell actual books?”

The shop owner looked at the books hanging above the stall, then frowned at the young woman.

“What kind of books? The ones hanging here are books too, aren’t they?”

The young woman smiled wryly. “No, not the same. What I mean are smaller books... uh... like novels. Have you ever seen bookstores like that here? Are there any in this district?”

The older woman slowly shook her head. “No, dear. This is a small district. Bookstores like you’re talking about—you have to drive to the provincial town.”

“Oh... that’s too bad. I can only ride a bicycle.”

“Where did you come from? What are you doing here?”

“I came to live with my brother. I feel lonely, so I want to find some books to read.”

“Is your brother working here?”

“He’s a school principal. You probably don’t know him, he’s not from around here.”

“Oh... I guess I really don’t know him.”

“But he’s married to someone from this district. I’m staying at his house for about a year, or if I can’t stand it, just two weeks.”

“What kinds of books do you want? Maybe I can ask someone to buy them for you.”

“Really, aunty? Then I’ll leave the money with you. I can pick them up tomorrow morning, right?”

“Tell me the book titles first, so I can see if they’re available.”

“I want ten Korean romance novels, any titles. I’ll leave 2,000 baht with you.”

The young woman pulled out her wallet, took out two 1,000-baht bills, and handed them to the smiling middle-aged shop owner, who shook her head gently.

“Keep the money for now, dear. You won’t get the books tomorrow morning. It’ll take three or four days. I’ll ask someone to buy them for you. But what’s your name?”

“My name is Kaem. And yours?”

“People around here call me Aunt Nui. Do you live at the teacher’s housing?”

“No, I live with my brother and sister-in-law. But three or four days is a long time. I want to read books today. It’s so lonely here.”

“This district is small, not much to do... Oh, I forgot to tell you, there’s someone selling old books near the temple pavilion over there. You should drop by and see if they have any Korean romance novels.”

The young woman’s eyes widened immediately.

“Really, aunty? That’s great. I have to go now. But... I can’t go without your phone number.”

The shop owner smiled widely, grabbed a pen and paper, and wrote down her phone number, handing it to the young woman.

As the bicycle sped away, Kaem still stood with her hands on her hips watching her go, trying to picture the cover of a Korean romance novel in her mind. She put her hand to her head and muttered to herself,

“What kind of book is that, anyway?”

***

The great river at the end of the dry season had its water level lowered so much that the sandy bottom appeared over a wide area. The fish cages sunk lower and farther from the riverbank. The road along the river in the late afternoon was empty. The riverside sidewalk restaurant began setting out tables. The sunlight poured down with waves of heat, but on the horizon, it looked as if rain clouds were preparing for the new season.

A white bicycle glided smoothly down the road slowly. When she reached the front of the temple, her large bright eyes scanned around. Nalida knew that she could not find any old bookshop on her own and would have to ask local people nearby. Thinking this, she put one foot down on the ground, stopped her bicycle under a tree's shade.

Before she could ask anyone passing by, her eyes caught sight of a green sign with an arrow:

"…Bookshop – Share and Read Together"

"Hmm... it must be this shop," Nalida told herself quietly.

The red arrow led her to the entrance of a small alley. She steered her bicycle into the alley, which led to a main road. Another sign's arrow pointed to a side alley ahead.

"Why is this so complicated?" Nalida muttered.

She reached a secondary road. The arrow sign now hung on a large rubber tree pointing out of town. Nalida almost gave up, ready to stop her bike and pedal back. But her thirst for Korean romance novels forced her to continue.

The arrow signs finally led her to an open grassy field. A dusty motocross bike stood alone. The half-brick, half-wood two-storey house had its front door wide open. Above the entrance hung a sign painted in artistic dark purple letters:

"Bookshop – Share and Read Together"

Nalida looked at it and understood that if the owner painted the sign herself, she must be quite skilled at drawing.

She parked her bicycle, walked with hands on hips, and looked at the shop's nameplate. Peering inside, she saw many books neatly arranged on shelves, as tidy as in a large bookstore.

A longtime self-proclaimed avid reader and graduate art student uncertain about her future—whether to continue studying or abandon it—Nalida told herself at that moment that she had come to the right place. With this shop, she didn't have to rely on Aunt Nui's buying service anymore. But hold on… she

thought to herself she must choose the right books carefully before calling to cancel the order she placed through Aunt Nui.

From now on, throughout her one-year contract as a temporary teacher, she would no longer be lonely and would have Korean romance novels to read fully each day. After her contract ended, she would reconsider what to do with her master's thesis. Likewise, the punishment of being exiled by her father to live at the border would end immediately once she gained her freedom and returned to Bangkok, pedaling her bike back.

She stepped through the door. Inside was quiet; the seller's shadow had not appeared. Nalida did not feel fear or panic because a bookstore is always full of friendship. The owner had put so much effort into hanging arrow signs on heavy electric poles—it was unlikely to be a trap set by a psychotic killer.

Wooden and plastic shelves lined the walls. A sign at the top said all books were priced at twenty baht each.

"Cheap!" Nalida whispered softly. "I should stock up at least a hundred books. Tomorrow I'll ask my sister-in-law to bring a car to move them."

She picked up the first translated book but before flipping it open, she quickly put it back down. Books with heavy intellectual content like this, Nalida wouldn't read. She picked up the second and third book, placing them down with the same hesitation. She moved to another shelf, took five or six books, then put them back.

"These are all useless books," she said. "I guess the owner must be eighty years old."

Moving to another shelf, she found novels by Thai authors whose names she vaguely recognized. That was somewhat better, closer to Korean-style romance. But her hope nearly died when she found that all were works of authors from an older generation: Botun, Krisana Asoksin, Srifa Laddawan, K. Surangkhanang, and Rapeeporn.

"There must be some cosmic alignment," Nalida murmured as she searched, then sat down exhausted and began rifling through a pile of books on the bottom shelf.

"They're all by elderly writers. I suspect the owner must be over ninety or close to old folks in Phetchaburi," she sighed.

No sign of Korean romance novels appeared. She complained as she continued searching. Suddenly, when she looked up, a pair of eyes stared at her from the back door exit.

The glaring backlight made it hard to see his face clearly until he stepped forward two or three paces.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello," she replied.

“Looking for books? I can help.”

The young man looked no older than thirty-five, wearing shorts and a white T-shirt. He was tall and slender, with shoulder-length messy hair, sparse moustache, pale skin. His voice was slow, soft, and deep. His eyes sent chills down her spine.

His hair tangled as if never groomed since a past life. His pale face looked like a dry grass covered from sunlight and wind for many years. What chilled her most were his icy, indifferent eyes.

Nalida sat frozen like a statue, avoiding his gaze, but the coldness seemed to spread down her spine. She had never seen anyone’s eyes so emotionless.

She stammered, “Are you the owner?”

He stood still in the middle of the glaring light like a scarecrow in a field. His calm voice sounded even more eerie:

“This isn’t really a shop. Nor is it a place of buying and selling. Twenty baht is just to share and read together.”

His polite words slightly eased the scary image. Nalida dared to ask, “What do you mean by ‘share and read together’ but still sell?”

As if attacked by an unexpected question, the young man was silent for a moment before explaining:

“Here’s the thing. I have many books. Seeing that this district has no pocketbook shops, I brought mine to share. If I gave them for free, people would just borrow and hoard and sell them for a few kilos. So I set the price at twenty baht as you see.”

“Oh...”

Nalida seemed to understand. Her hands stopped rifling the pile for a moment before moving again to the last shelf. She hadn’t moved yet when she stood up, tired of searching alone. The owner, or the ‘sharing hand’, was here, so she didn’t have to exert herself anymore. She only needed to tell him what she wanted, and he would find it for her.

“Do you make a profit?” she asked.

“The profit is the happiness of readers,” he answered.

“That’s either a fantasy or an ideal.”

“That’s my personal feeling.”

“How long has this been open?”

“About a month now.”

“How much have you sold?”

“Almost a hundred baht.”

“And not bankrupt… uh… losing money?”

He stayed in place, as if inviting her to choose as many books as she liked. She heard the word ‘bankrupt’ clearly but saw no anger. Nalida dared not look him straight in the eye, unsure whether to compare his gaze to a zombie or a cold-blooded killer.

“My shop will never go bankrupt. When all the books here are sold, the people in this district will have read tens of thousands of books.”

“Do you have romance novels?” Nalida stood up.

“Yes, plenty. Go look in that corner, all romance novels. I’ve sorted them by category.”

***

Nalida moved to the front of the romance novel shelf and scanned the titles and authors’ names on the spines. Her arms hung loosely by her sides; she didn’t reach out to pick up any book. She recognized some novels she had once been forced to read by a teacher, but that was long ago, and she wasn’t impressed enough to pick one up to read again.

“He’s named Kan. Is this considered a romance novel?” she asked while continuing to scan the book spines on the shelf.

“Yes,” the shop owner replied shortly.

“Madame Bovary — which era is this book from?”

“If I’m not mistaken, it was first printed over a hundred years ago. The Thai translation was around before 2570 BE (around 2027 CE).”

“Who was alive back then? Oh... just old stuff.”

“Good books never get old. It’s the bad books that come out new that age quickly and die first.”

“Tess of the d’Urbervilles — is this fun to read?”

“It’s a good book. Take it home and read it. If you like romance novels, I guarantee you won’t be disappointed. Many years ago it was made into a movie.”

“Many years ago...”

“Yes.”

Nalida slowly turned away from the conversation. The shop owner’s words and answers weren’t as frightening as his dry, barren eyes had been. At least, he wasn’t a zombie or a killer. His voice sounded emotionless, but his words were polite, and his manner gentle, not stiff like his gaze.

When she looked back, she saw him sitting on a small chair. His face was pale as if he had been in the shade for many years. His wide-open eyes might not be the icy cold she had initially thought; Nalida seemed to see a hint of loneliness hidden there. He turned to look out through the door.

“Do you have any new books?” Nalida asked.

“Yes,” he averted his gaze. “The newest just came out last month. Want me to recommend some?”

“Romance novels.”

“Translated works or Thai authors?”

“Korean. I like Korean romance novels.”

He seemed about to stand up but remained seated.

“We don’t have any Korean romance novels.”

“Oh... that’s too bad. Your shop is so out of date.”

With no hope of finding books to take home, Nalida swept her gaze over the shelves and the bare walls. Although clean, it felt too empty to her. Yes... empty. Though there were thousands of books, none was meant for her.

She looked through the door at the white bicycle parked outside, thinking of loneliness and hopeless life in the border district. It would be a long time before school reopened. Maybe she’d ask her brother to let her return to Bangkok for two weeks. He probably wouldn’t mind; he gave her full freedom. But her father, who wanted to discipline her severely, surely wouldn’t agree.

“Can I place a special order?” Nalida decided to try one last time. “Korean romance novels.”

He stood up.

“Yes.”

“I don’t travel much, but I can ask my sister to buy them for you.”

“Can I get them tomorrow?”

He stood with hands on hips, shaking his head.

“Not that fast. About a month.”

“Oh...” Nalida exclaimed loudly. “I’ll die of withdrawal.”

“Sorry,” he moved toward the bookshelves, then looked at her. “Sorry to ask directly, but why only Korean romance novels?”

The chill ran down her spine again. Nalida stepped back. Why Korean romance novels? Because she liked them.

Regaining composure, Nalida stood firm, amused to argue and tease the other party into anger—but she had to win over those icy eyes first.

She stared at him directly. This time he looked away.

“Because they’re fun. If Thai romances were good enough, they could compensate. Do you have any?”

The young man bit his lip softly.

“I have one, but sadly it’s water-damaged and I can’t lend it to you now. It’s an enjoyable story.”

“It can dry in the sun.”

“The pages have come loose; it’s no longer a book. Some pages are hard to read. I’ll gather it for you.”

“Okay.”

“This novel might help you forget all about Korean romance novels.”

“To that extent?”

“I hope so.”

“I’ll pick it up tomorrow morning.”

“I won’t have it printed in time.” He pushed the book spine back onto the shelf. “Today is Saturday. Come next Saturday. I’ll charge you two baht per chapter.”

Nalida stifled a laugh, wanting to tease him into anger again but couldn’t find the words. She smiled more than she ever had in her life.

“In that case, I won’t rely on your service. The shop at the market will buy books for me.”

“Okay. But if you change your mind, the best romance novels will be waiting for you here, next Saturday.”

***

He stood at the doorway, watching the white bicycle pedal away.

In the faint sunlight filtering through the roadside grass, Nalida turned her head to look back. Lonely eyes seemed to follow her. He stood there, motionless, as if he would not move until she returned to this place again next Saturday.

Nalida pedaled farther away, a question forming in her mind.

If she got the books she wanted from Aunt Nui, would she come back to the “Share and Read Together” bookstore again?

Because here, there were no books meant for her.

Even though the owner bragged about having one book that would make her forget all about Korean romance novels, that was just talk with no real value.

Maybe it was like a shop hanging goat heads but selling dog meat—advertising grandly but with low quality in reality.

His boastful words contained no substance.

“I don’t like liars...”

She tightened her face and repeated to herself that she would never return to that loquacious bookstore again.

Chapter 2: The Young Woman Searching for Romance Novels

Nalida arrived at the bookstall near the fresh market just after noon. In truth, she had wanted to look around since early morning but restrained herself with reasons and reflections typical of someone who believed she was somewhat meticulous. If she had rushed in like a fool, she would have returned home empty-handed instead of with books. She needed to give time and opportunity to others. As an expert reader—at least that's what she often reminded herself with a favorite saying:

"...Giving others a chance is giving yourself a chance. When demanding a wide world from others, your heart must be wider than the whole world..."

A middle-aged woman sat with a boy about twelve or thirteen. She had seen Nalida park her bicycle on the sidewalk and stood up with the boy, smiling and greeting her, asking:

"Are you here to be a teacher at Suan Prao School?"

Nalida was startled. How had her secret leaked so quickly? She hadn't even started teaching for a minute, and her name shouldn't have been on any school noticeboard. Where had the grocer selling newspapers heard this?

"How do you know so well?" she asked.

"Tum, say 'Hello, teacher,' dear," the woman said to her son.

The thin boy raised his hand in greeting to the prospective teacher. Nalida blushed, hastily returning the greeting.

"He'll enter grade 9 this year. What grade will you teach?" Aunt Nui asked.

"Lower secondary," Nalida answered, still embarrassed by the title.

"Well, maybe you can finally teach this little monkey to behave," Aunt Nui joked, nodding toward her son. "I heard you're Professor Chaisit's younger sister."

“Yes,” Nalida glanced at the newspapers on the stall and picked up one.

“How did you know who my brother is?” she pressed, tracking down the source of the rumor.

“Oh… Professor Chaisit often stops by to buy newspapers. I know him well. Not only me, everyone here knows him.”

“That’s unfortunate…”

“Why unfortunate, Teacher Kaem?”

“Oh… I meant the news in the newspaper is unfortunate.”

“Yes, yes, I think so too. People are killing each other every day.”

Nalida pulled out money and handed it to Aunt Nui. She didn’t want to talk about Korean romance novels in front of future students and didn’t dare ask about the books she had asked to be bought.

Aunt Nui smiled as she took the money for the newspaper. “Oh… the books you asked for will take another day or two. But I don’t know if we’ll get them. Our province is small—not like Bangkok where everything is available.”

Nalida lowered her head and said, “That’s all right, aunty. I don’t want to read those novels anymore. Once school starts, I’ll be busy.”

“I’ll ask Tum to help. He’s a bit slow in school, so please take care of him.”

“Okay,” Nalida accepted. She said goodbye and exchanged greetings with the grocer’s son, then pedaled her white bicycle away slowly, as if lost in thought.

The bicycle lazily wandered ahead without destination. The hot sun shining down seemed to carry her loneliness with it. It would be several more days before school resumed. She still didn't know what she would teach the children. Hearing people call her 'teacher' made her feel shy and wish to run far away.

Exiled to this lonely border town life, she disliked watching television. She preferred being with books. She liked sweet romance novels—imaginative stories about tall, broad-shouldered heroes with short hair, sharp square faces, and soft voices. Within their close embrace, the whole world appeared beautiful, warm, and gentle beyond compare.

Besides the stereotypical hero, she also pictured the heroine—bright-eyed, a little shy, but strong-willed—who had long hair, couldn't drive but loved riding a bicycle and reading romance novels with all her heart. Now the poor heroine was struggling terribly.

Nalida stopped her bicycle near the riverbank dam, looked across the other side, and thought of close friends who had all fled abroad to study. None remained to send sweet romance novels for her. She sighed deeply. Her current life felt like a true downward crisis.

"Why does everything have to be so bad?" she vented to the flowing river.

Thinking of the secondhand bookshop, she shook her head and pressed her lips together. She would never submit to buying that boastful book.

But not entirely... Nalida hadn't yet closed the door on herself. It wasn't Saturday yet; stopping by now would be a waste of time. She was easy to get along with and talked non-stop but always felt like there wasn't enough air to breathe whenever she had to live in a world full of taciturn people.

If she was forced back there again, she would stop by, buy that book the owner bragged about, pay two baht, then pedal away quickly.

"If it's no fun, I'll just toss it..." Nalida told herself.

***

Saturday afternoon, the white bicycle glided swiftly past the central temple. The long hair of the young woman fluttered in the breeze. In the past few days, she had received five books to keep in her bedroom, the first batch sent by Aunt Nui. Nalida almost laughed out loud—they weren't the romance novels she wanted but Japanese comics, the kind that crowded many rental shops in Bangkok. Not wanting to hurt Aunt Nui's feelings, she accepted them without complaint.

"Is this what Korean romance novels are like, Teacher Kaem?" Aunt Nui asked.

"Not exactly, but five is enough. I'm going to stop reading those kinds of books," Nalida replied.

"Getting ready to teach the kids, huh?"

"Yes."

"The school should look better now with another young female teacher. The young male teachers will be happy."

"I don't know if they could stand me for long. I talk nonstop."

"No, Teacher Kaem, your voice is lovely and... you're beautiful, too."

"Teacher Kaem, lovely voice and beautiful too." These words turned the meaningless comic books into keepsakes she kept without feeling they were worthless.

Approaching the bookstore, Nalida caught the scent of grilled chicken carried by the wind. A few days ago, she hadn't noticed whether this vendor was still selling. The enticing aroma grew stronger as she pedaled closer to the shade of a large tamarind tree. A middle-aged woman and her little daughter stared at her hopefully.

"Grilled chicken?" the vendor called out.

The bicycle slowed. “I’ll get the books first. On the way back, I’ll stop by. Not sure if the owner is home.”

“She’s here... that person never goes anywhere. Don’t forget to stop by on your way back.”

Nalida put both feet down, still sitting on the bike, pressing the bell repeatedly, hoping someone inside would hear and come out. Silence for two full minutes. She pressed the bell again—another minute and a half of silence.

“Maybe sleeping,” she thought, ringing the bell again and again.

She hadn’t planned to enter the house or the so-called bookstore, but with no response from the bell and the eerie quiet like an abandoned house, she couldn’t help but get off her bike. For a moment she thought about leaving, but then reminded herself she had come this far and shouldn’t go home empty-handed.

If that guy wasn’t sitting lonely somewhere, he was probably napping through the day like a lazybones. She deliberately dropped a small item to make a noise but did not shout.

The moment she stepped inside, Nalida’s eyes widened. The bookstore she had seen last Saturday had transformed like it was reborn into the world. Another picture hung on the left wall—a large watercolor painting with another on the right wall. The room had a sofa and a well-arranged coffee table. Every corner was neat, decorated with bright artificial flowers.

The bookshelves were orderly. The messy piles from last Saturday were gone. Breathing deeply, she sensed a faint scent of flowers.

She quietly scanned the room, careful not to make noise, forgetting how she had intended to call the owner out.

She turned to look at the left side again. Her gaze fell on a beautiful watercolor painting on the coffee table—a young woman wearing a silver-blue skirt, standing with long flowing hair in a flower meadow.

When Nalida picked it up, she realized it was not just a painting but a handmade book cover for a thin volume:

"...Angel’s Heart and the Angel in the Heart, Episode One..."

In the silence, hearing only her own breathing, she stared at the cover’s title and painting. Looking up again, a pair of indifferent eyes stared at her. No greeting spoken, he stood at the back door leading outside.

“Is this the book?” she asked.

The owner stood still, answering only with a slow nod.

“Why is it so short? I finished reading in less than an hour,” she said, flipping through the pages.

“You can read it again,” he replied.

“I don’t like rereading. When I finish, I want a new book.”

“Rereading helps you understand better.”

“No matter how much I like it, I never read again.”

“Then you have to train yourself.”

His tone was stern, as if deliberately coercing. Before, Nalida would have stamped her feet and shouted insults. She almost did, if some invisible power hadn’t held her back.

She tried to glare, but met his icy stare that chilled her spine. Her lips pressed tightly, and she turned her face away.

She flipped the pages to cover her defeat, gathering strength for a new fight. He avoided her gaze. Not her. Since he was the seller, she had to accept the buyer's condition: if she wanted several episodes, he had to produce them.

Gathering such strength was harder than before. She bought time by turning pages one by one, then paused at a painting.

The handmade book was thin, beautifully illustrated on every page, which reduced text but the beauty soothed her so much she forgot to start a verbal war with the owner.

"Is the story this short?"

"Only one episode."

"Why not finish the whole story?"

"I print slowly. The water-damaged pages make it hard to extract the text."

"Oh… that's too bad. When will I get the next episode?"

"Next Saturday."

Her desire to read plummeted. She almost threw the book away and walked out, never to return to the strange bookstore and its strange owner.

But... she liked the bright colors of the paintings. Although the story wasn't fun or engaging, not as wonderful as the man claimed, the beautiful illustrations were worth collecting.

She pulled out two baht and handed it to him. "That's all."

“Yes,” he accepted.

Just as she almost left, she noticed another unfinished painting hanging on an easel near the back door. She walked closer.

“You paint too? It’s so beautiful even unfinished.”

He stood in his usual place, nodding once.

“Why do you paint?”

“For the cover of the second episode.”

“Do you sell your paintings?”

He shook his head.

She looked at the large painting on the wall and pointed, asking, “Did you paint all of these yourself?”

He nodded again.

She felt as if the air lightened, her breath eased. Looking through the illustrations of the first episode, it seemed something was about to bind her here. Though the story was outdated and dull, she might have to come back for the beautiful pictures.

“You paint well. Why don’t you sell them?”

She asked, stepping closer with shining eyes, expecting a truthful answer—not to start a fight but to get honesty.

His pale face showed no smile. “Because I paint when I want to. If I made it a profession or sold paintings, I might only produce two or three a year.”

“Then how come you have so many here?” She flipped through the handmade book.

“Because I want to paint.”

She smiled softly. “What’s your name?”

He looked away. “Phu… Phudin.”

“Phu… that’s good, but ‘Din’ at the end isn’t nice. Why didn’t you put Phu higher?”

“I don’t know. My father named me.”

“Why don’t you ask your father? Call him tonight.”

He bowed his head briefly, then slowly met her gaze. The loneliness once hidden there seemed gone, replaced by a sparkle she didn’t understand—like a fleeting scene from a novel that disappears quickly.

He stepped to the back door, turned, and answered:

“My father’s gone. I can’t call him.”

***

The white bicycle rolled slowly along the riverside road. The afternoon sun shone behind her, opposing the rain wind blowing from the other side. Her pedaling was weak.

Nalida still thought about the final look and voice.

“My father’s gone. I can’t call him.”

Her natural tendency to talk and question without thinking what was appropriate made her regret. People have many stories in life they want to hide. When triggered, they feel compelled to tell them through memories. The mouth might keep silent, but inside, the feelings push the story forward from beginning to end.

She only said “sorry,” but that did not end the story in his heart. By now, he might be sitting with his face in his hands on the stone table behind the house. Even her own eyes carried his sad story, a tragic novel inside her heart.

Next Saturday, she promised herself she must come again. Not only for the next episode or the beautiful watercolor paintings she wanted, but to apologize to him once more. She would not ask about his past again.

She would come to pick up every episode, even though the romance was over. But she would keep visiting with hope until she was sure the sad story in that man’s heart had ended completely and beautifully.