**The Resort Ambassador**

by ReaderMan

**Chapter 6 - Emi in Trouble**

**— The Shrine —**

Emi exited the path and hit the beach. A quick glance showed that the path along the beach was empty as usual. Emi jumped off the path and ran along the beach. Suddenly she saw people up ahead. She skidded to a stop, leaving two trails in the sand and a little dust puff.

A large boulder, smaller than a Volkswagen Beetle was the only nearby cover.  She quickly dove behind it, landing in a pile of soft sand. Her entire front had sand plastered to her sweaty body. She ignored the bitter taste of sand in her mouth and scrambled to a squatting position with her hands against the rock. She stayed low, ready to run in either direction.

Two teens, a boy, and a girl were sitting on the shoreline with their feet in the water. A big man, dressed in khaki was standing close behind them. They all had black hair; likely they were of Chinese descent.

Had they seen her? She didn’t know. They could be walking towards her right now. She had to look. She crawled around the boulder and carefully peeked. It seemed like nobody had noticed her, which was a HUGE relief. But there was ANOTHER person in front of the shrine! An older lady with white hair and a simple grey robe. She was praying.

“Becca, Becca, Becca,” she mumbled to herself.  Jesus! The words had no power now. This was too real. It was scary as hell, and her heart was beating like crazy.

What to do? She had to calm down and think! She tried to wipe some sand from her mouth with her sandy arm, while she looked around, but that action only added more sand to her mouth. A black BMW was parked between Emi and the shrine where the service road had ended. There didn’t seem to be anyone inside of it.

She looked down at her body. She was covered in sand. It was all sticking to her as she was sweating like crazy and still breathing hard. Wait! She had an idea.

Moving back behind the bolder she rolled around in the sand and frantically rubbed some in her face. Camouflage! She got up and squatted with her hands against the rock, spying on the people, like some kind of ancient native, covered in sand. Looking down at her sand-covered body, Emi realized cover was not very effective, but anything was better than nothing.

The man was now squatting with his hands on each of the teen’s shoulders. The kids were looking down at their feet. It looked as if he might be lecturing them, but she couldn’t be sure as they were too far away to hear.

The elderly woman got up suddenly. She snatched Emi’s wish paper and ripped it angrily. This was not looking good, Emi thought. She had to get out of there. Where could she go?

She considered her options. Go back up to Lookout Point? Maybe, but that would be risky. They might glance towards the path. They would be able to see her for at least 30 seconds. And then if they followed her up there she would be trapped.

Staying put was also not wise. If they moved towards Lookout Point then she would have to move around the boulder until the woman would be able to see her.

The woman went back to praying, so Emi looked at the three near the water. She had to duck back again. One of the kids pointed up to Lookout Point. Were they thinking of going there next? If so she would probably be seen as that would have Emi between them and the woman.

There were a couple more large rocks, almost as big. They were near the car. Maybe she could hide behind those. That way, even if they all suddenly went to Lookout Point or even back to the car, then she might still have some cover. Yes, that was the best plan. Go to the smaller boulders and just wait for them to leave.

After making sure nobody was looking in her direction, Emi suddenly sprinted towards the car, as it was the next closest piece of cover. However, when she was almost there the woman started to stand up. Emi dove behind the car, replenishing some of her front camouflage in the process.

Peeking through the car windows, she saw that the woman had only adjusted her position and was once again praying. Emi was relieved to see that but then she saw someone in the car. A young girl was sprawled out unconscious in the backseat. Sweat dripped from Emi’s dirty sandy face as she looked at the child, a Chinese girl, maybe ten years old or so.  She was wearing a fancy dress and expensive-looking shoes. She had her hair up like Hannah’s, which looked entirely too adult for a child. She wasn’t moving at all.

Cupping her hands to the window to block out some of the sun’s glare, Emi tried to get a better look. The car was hot. Really hot. And all the windows were closed. Was the child sleeping or was she unconscious from heatstroke? Did these people not know that you don’t leave a child in the car on a hot sunny day? Unbelievable! She cupped her hands again looking for signs of life. She tried to open the door. Locked! The girl seemed to be breathing at least. “Oh thank God,” she muttered to herself.

Emi squatted, holding her head with both hands. What the hell? The girl might die if she didn’t do something. This whole situation was bad! A quick glance around revealed no rocks that she could use to break the window. Probably not a great idea. She could yell and call the people over, but then everyone would see her.

After half a minute, her fear of being caught was dissipating as her panic for the child grew. She had to do something. Something fast. She slapped the window in an attempt to wake the child. Maybe the child was just sleeping and she could tell her to open the window.

The child didn’t respond. Ready to yell out loud for help, Emi tried one more time and pounded on the window with her fists. She looked around and nobody seemed to notice her. Emi started to feel some anger as she looked again at the woman.

The girl suddenly sat up, looking confused. Finally, she noticed Emi. She screamed and jumped back almost comically. Fortunately, the sound was absorbed by the car.

Emi gestured to the girl to roll down the windows, smiling in a friendly manner.

The girl looked terrified. Almost as if Emi was a wild animal that was trying to get into the car. She cowered away to the far side of the backseat.

This wasn’t working. Emi figured that she must look scary with her dirty face. She was glad that the girl was up and moving around but she was still in danger if she stayed in that hot car with the windows rolled up. Emi stood up and looked above the car to see if the others had noticed anything yet. They didn’t and she considered calling out to them, but then ducked down and put her face in the window again. “O-pen the win-dow,” she said out loud, but not too loudly.

The girl was sitting up now. Suddenly she had an astonished look on her face.

She must have noticed my naked breasts, Emi thought. Maybe a naked female is less scary? Emi smiled again and gestured to roll down the window just a tiny bit so they can talk. The girl seemed to be thinking about it.

Gesturing just a half-inch between her fingers, Emi signaled again to lower the window so they can talk. When the kid didn’t respond Emi made a talking motion with her hand, trying to look a bit goofy and silly to ease the kid’s fears.

The girl scowled and tapped the power window control and lowered it half an inch. “This is a private beach you homeless bum. Leave immediately you weirdo!” she commanded, stabbing her finger out towards Emi from the other side of the car. She was keeping her distance.

“You have to open your windows or get out of the car,” Emi explained. “You will get heatstroke otherwise. You could easily die.”

“Are you homeless?” the kid asked, ignoring Emi’s comment. She sat up trying to get a better look at Emi.

Emi didn’t know what to say. “I was…  swimming. I decided to go for a swim,” Emi explained, and then I had to hide as I didn’t want anyone to see me naked.”

“Hahaha… where are your clothes?”

“I hid them, so nobody would take them.”

“That’s so funny! You’re in BIG trouble. Everyone will see you soon, you’re so screwed!” she laughed, holding her hands to her face. “Mr. Tam is an ex-cop, and he will catch you so fast!”

Emi didn’t like the sound of that. Not at all. She looked over at Mr. Tam, the man the girl had indicated. He was still chatting with the teens. Something small on the shoreline seemed to have their attention. Maybe it was a crab or something. A camera sound! Emi saw the girl pointing an iPhone at her. Jeezus! Emi ducked down, hiding her breasts. Can this situation get any worse? Oh my God! Now there was a picture!

The girl, sensing Emi’s fear, giggled and tried to take another picture. But Emi was now down out of view.

Emi moved closer to the car and squatted down, hiding everything with her hands. “Please don’t take pictures of me,” she pleaded.

The girl giggled uncontrollably as she rolled the window down halfway so she could see more of Emi. She stuck the phone out the window and took another picture of Emi’s cowering form.

Emi cowered even lower. “Please don’t,” she pleaded. Then she reached up and snatched the phone from the surprised girl’s hands.

The girl jumped back in fear.

Emi deleted the pictures as quickly as she could.

“I’ll honk the horn! Mr. Tam will arrest you!”

“Okay! I give up, you win,” said Emi, cowering again so that the girl would feel more in control. She needed to keep the kid from alerting the others.

“You think you’re so smart!” she said, then she blurted out something in Chinese.

“I don’t speak Chinese,” said Emi, staying low. “Please don’t honk the horn. I’ll do anything you want.”

The kid ignored her and moved towards the horn, seemingly determined to press it.

“I’ll take naked selfies for you and then give you the phone back,” Emi said desperately.

The girl hesitated.

“You can be the boss,” Emi added.

“That’s right. I’m the boss. You have to do what I say,” the kid said, starting to relax. She moved away from the horn and sat back down in the backseat. “What are you? Korean?”

“Japanese”

“You’re a Jap?” she said with a disgusted tone.

Emi couldn’t believe the situation. She didn’t know how to respond, so she just ignored the racist comment. “Okay, okay… let me set up the camera timer to get you a good picture,” said Emi, as she quickly emptied the deleted pictures. Permanently deleting them. Then she took a full-frontal picture of herself and showed the kid. “Is this what you want?”

“Yes, like that. Take lots!” the kid commanded, drunk with her new power.

“Yes Ma’am,” said Emi, pretending to get ready to do that. She deleted the picture, deleted the backup and then switch the camera to face the other way and started pretending to take selfies of herself. “How many do you want?”

“Lots!” the kid demanded, smiling in victory.

Emi pretended to take selfies of herself, as she checked to make sure nobody could see what was going on on the other side of the car. She was just taking pictures in the opposite direction while showing fake fear. It wasn’t all acting, she was actually quite scared and wondering if escape was even possible anymore. She kept an eye on the others as she took lots of pictures of the car and anything but herself. Then she powered down the phone. “Okay, I’m done. Here is your phone back.” Emi said, meekly. Meanwhile, Emi was still keeping tabs on the woman and the three over by the water.

The girl started to move forward to take the phone when Emi decided to make her move. “Ouch! My foot!” She pretended something bit her foot and jumped, and the phone ‘accidentally’ got tossed into the front seat and bounced to the floor next to the car’s foot peddles. The child would have to climb to the front and then power up the phone before realizing the ruse.

“Hey!” the child scowled at Emi.

“Sorry, something bit my foot,” she said, smiling apologetically.

The child was not amused and started to climb over the seat.

Emi decided, now or never! With the girl distracted and nobody looking in her direction, she sprinted to the other side of the shrine, slowing as she got closer so as to not alert the woman praying.

She’d made it! Behind the shrine, she moved very carefully towards where her suit was. There was a crack sound when she stepped on a plant root or something. She froze.

Through the branches, Emi could see that the woman had stopped praying. The woman looked around and then resumed praying, only this time there was no chant. Emi needed to be extra quiet as she started to carefully make her way forward again. It would be tricky to get her swimsuit without the woman noticing, but it might be possible.

Her suit! She could see it. Just one more step and she bent down to grab it. Suddenly Emi was pulled back by her hair.

It was the woman! She was pretty strong and yelling something in Chinese. Emi didn’t want to hurt her, but the woman had a death grip on her hair with both hands. What the hell! The woman was wailing out loud and soon that big guy would come if he wasn’t already running towards them. Having no choice Emi decided to just risk the pain and pulled the woman’s hands off her hair while shaking her head.

The lady fell back in the sand wailing in Chinese again, surely calling for help.

Emi quickly grabbed her suit. No time to dress! She had to get the hell out of there. Run back to the resort. She spun around to run just as her peripheral vision caught the ex-cop flying through the air at her like a football player.

She ducked! But it was not fast enough. He managed to grab her arm and pull her down with him.

Emi struggled as if her life depended upon it. She managed to wiggle free and get up.

He was up too and dove again and snagged her foot as she tried to run in the sand. He had her. She was down.

Emi struggled furiously, but he just sat on her pushing down hard on her back. She had to turn her head sideways to get some air. She had been captured!

“Calm down, young lady,” he said, holding her down somewhat effortlessly. “You seem to be naked,” he said with some amusement in his tone.

Emi was embarrassed and terrified. She couldn’t even speak.

“Were you trying to get rid of your tan lines?” he asked, enjoying the moment.

Emi finally found her voice. “Let me put on my suit,” she begged through ragged breaths. “I have it in my hands.” She waved her hand with her suit.

“Well, I’m a gentleman. I’ll grant that,” he said, holding onto her foot firmly as he rolled off her.

Emi quickly got up in a crawling position, her naked ass facing him. She really didn’t like that but needed to get dressed. She got up on her knees and saw the two teens racing towards her. The woman was also stomping towards her angrily, holding her arm. The kid in the car just opened the door. Having no choice but to put on her top first Emi got up on her knees and before she could get the top on, the guy pulled her around to the other side of himself. She almost lost her top. “Hey!” Emi complained.

The woman was screaming and trying to kick her. He was protecting Emi from her while obviously trying to calm the woman down. He was now speaking in Chinese. Emi knew very few Chinese words, but she knew the word ‘Police’. Oh please, don’t let them call the police, she thought. Her feelings of panic began growing again.

The teen boy and girl arrived and were staring at her in astonishment. The girl looked like an older version of the spoiled brat in the car, only she was wearing a black one-piece swimsuit. The boy was dressed in a green swimsuit and had a crewcut. They seemed 16 years old or so. They both had smartphones attached to their upper arms as if they were runners.

The woman started to calm down after the guy explained something that included the word ‘police’ again. He had her arm and she couldn’t get her top on so she tried to get her bottoms on when the teens began reaching for their phones. They managed to get some shots off before the man put Emi face down in the sand and sat on her rear. He seemed to be helping Emi cover most of her nudity. She was relieved about that one little thing even though it was just a drop in the bucket compared to this crazy and humiliating situation. Her face was flushed. She had never been so embarrassed in her life and it was getting hard to breathe as he was sitting on her and she was still out of breath. She had to keep her mouth closed or get sand in it. She was still completely naked with the suit pieces in her fists. Her top in one hand and the bottoms in another.

“I totally got everything,” the teen girl said with glee.

“Let me see!” said the boy. “I only got her ass.”

Emi couldn’t believe this was happing. Her life was over. It couldn’t get any worse than this. She tried to turn her head away from the teens, but now she faced the furious looking woman.

“Come closer and get a picture of her ass,” the ex-cop said, amusement in his voice again.

Emi couldn’t take any more. She started to cry.

Excited, the two teens got really close and the ex-cop snatched the phones from them and put them into his coat pocket. “I’ll take these for now,” he said to the shocked teens.

Emi stopped crying. Hope surged in her as she listened.

“We can’t do anything that could help this young woman’s case. Yang wants maximum charges,” he explained. “I’ll give you the phones later after I remove the images.”

The teens swore and kicked the sand. Some of it hit Emi, acutely reminding her of her lack of clothes once again. Not that she needed reminding. She had never been so afraid and humiliated in her entire life and now the police were coming. This guy’s decency was not as it had seemed. Likely he was just trying to make sure whatever charges were brought against her, would stick.

The young girl from the car finally joined everyone else as they looked at Emi with the ex-cop sitting on her. At least her front was hidden and he was sitting on her ass. She was mostly covered. Her suit pieces still in her clenched fists.

The woman yelled something. He then leaned forward and asked Emi gently, “Did you tie papers to her daughter’s grave shrine?”

Emi winced. She was shocked. Was it a grave shrine? No wonder the woman was so upset. Seeing that she was in a lot of trouble now, she didn’t want to make it worse. They could probably trace her handwriting. She nodded.

“Why did you hide your suit in with the plants?” he asked. His tone was less amused now. He was starting to sound like a cop.

“I didn’t want anyone to steal it. I was thinking to go for a swim,” Emi said, fumbling for a reason that made sense.

“You wanted to swim without your swimsuit?” his voice seemed amused again. “You know you may have damaged some of the shrine’s plants…” he said, gently.

Emi started to cry again.

He sighed. “Don’t worry too much. You will probably just get a fine, I suspect,” he said, consoling her.

Emi tried to stop. She tried to maintain some dignity. If that was possible.

The woman talked calmly to him. It sounded like she was giving him instructions. Her calm voice sounded even more menacing than her enraged voice. Despair started to overwhelm her.

The little girl from the car suddenly pulled on his shoulder. “She stole my phone and threw it into the ocean!” she cried suddenly, wailing and wiping her eyes. “I can’t go to school without my phone!”

Emi was horrified. Why was the girl lying? She peeked up at her and it was a crappy performance if she ever saw one.

The woman said something to the big man. It sounded like an order.

“Alright! I’ll get her a brand new one,” he said, pulling out his cell phone. “Jackson… yes… I need a favor. I need you to get the sheriff to send three squad cars,” he said into the phone. “No seriously, some poor tourist girl pissed Yang off big time… I’m serious. Her daughter’s grave was tampered with and Wang and the young lady struggled for a bit and Wang might have twisted her wrist.

Emi couldn’t believe what she was hearing. This was only getting worse and worse.

“I don’t care. You know the sheriff and I don’t get along anymore. Pull rank, or Wang will withhold funding and will not support you in the next election. I’m not kidding…  okay, good. Hurry up.” He put his phone away.

Emi started to shake and breathe in little gasps. It was hopeless. She was totally screwed. Tears filled her eyes and she started sobbing.

A short while later Emi heard the sirens. They were coming for her.

“Don’t worry too much,” he said quietly into her ear. “Most of this is just for show.”

Emi didn’t know what to believe. She sensed he was likely just trying to calm her down with some false reassurance. She was trapped here, completely naked, and the police were coming. More people would soon see her. They might photograph her. Maybe she will be on the evening news!  She tried to calm down, to believe his words… at least for the sake of her beating heart. It almost started to work until one after another, three police cars rolled up and lots of people were getting out of the cars. It was more than just police, there seemed to be a whole forensic team. What did they think this was?  A murder? Emi felt like she was about to pass out as an officer came over to her.

He took out some handcuffs and signaled for her to be lifted up.

It was all too much for Emi as they lifted her up and handcuffed her hands in front. A young officer led her towards a police car while someone was taking photos of the ‘crime scene’ and talking to the woman in Chinese. Emi’s suit still uselessly, clenched in each hand as she kept her head low. Her hair was too short to hide behind, unfortunately.

“Is that you Emi?” said the young officer leading her to the car.

Emi looked up and recognized Officer Daniels. She kept her cuffed hands over her pussy and shook her head and quickly looked down, trying to avoid his fascinated gaze. It’s not me. It’s not me. The last thing she wanted was to meet someone who knew her. Her cheeks burned crimson as he looked closer at her, obviously recognizing her. This was beyond humiliating.

“Jeezus, why are you naked?” he asked, trying not to look at what he was talking about.

Emi couldn’t speak. It was hard enough walking slowly in the sand as the wind coursed over her body, reminding her endlessly of her lack of clothing.

“Becca told me that you hated everything about nudity,” he said, as he led her towards one of the squad cars.

Emi looked at him suddenly. He was talking with Becca?

Seeing Emi’s confused expression he added sheepishly, “Becca and I have been dating.”

Emi thought about that and then suddenly her brain woke up.

“Can I get dressed?” she asked, wondering why she didn’t ask sooner.

“Yes, of course!” he stopped her and let her put her bottoms on first.

Quickly she rushed to the task, but it was awkward and he got to see her in all her glory. Her dark thin runway and everything out in the open as she hurriedly tried to pull up her bottoms with her handcuffs.  She only succeeded in stumbling forwards. Her bottoms got stuck for a second under her foot and she fell forward. He caught her awkwardly, one arm crushing her breasts flat. She felt her nipples pressing deep into his arm as he looked at her, holding her just inches from the sand.

“Uh sorry!” he said, suddenly realizing the inappropriate touching and dropped her like a hot potato. She did a face plant deep into the sand.

Emi stayed still with her entire face and nose buried in the sand. She held her breath and decided to play dead.

“Emi!…” he shouted, grabbing her roughly by the arms and turned her over onto her back. Her hands still cuffed and held above her head in the sand, his eyes danced over her body briefly and he sucked in a sharp breath. He turned his head trying to hide his intense interest.

At that moment, Emi briefly wished that he wasn’t dating Becca. She forgot herself briefly and absorbed his pure adulation of her. It was lifting.

“Are you okay?” He asked sincerely, looking at the car and some other things around the beach.

Emi felt flattered at his reactions, but then the moment ended as a big police officer walked by, looking at Emi’s sand-covered nudity.

Officer Daniels regained his composure and opened the trunk of the car. Grabbing a blanket, he used it to brush sand off of her. “I just cleaned the car,” he explained as he quickly brushed every part of her body and then had her hold her hands up so he could lower her tube top down over her breasts.

Another officer walked by.

Emi awkwardly pulled up her bottoms and adjusted her top as best as she could and stared at Daniels. She tried not to think about how her body had reacted to his brushing and brief touches. “Can you let Su-Ning know what happened? Don’t tell anyone else… please. I don’t want my team making fun of me… or knowing how I was caught,” she explained.

“I highly doubt Becca would make fun. She thinks very highly of you,” he argued.

“Nobody, please. Promise me. I’ll just pay Su-Ning back for the fine and nobody ever has to know,” said Emi, wiping tears from her eyes with her handcuffed hands.

“Don’t worry. I couldn’t tell Becca even if I wanted to. It would be illegal and I could lose my job.”

Emi nodded, relief flooding over her as she wiped away a tear and sat down in the back seat.

This was the first time she had ever been in a police car. She was wearing her swimsuit now, but this was an entirely new layer of humiliation. She was a good person, not a criminal. It must seem otherwise she thought as the boy outside looked at her with disgust. They just looked at each other. Everyone else was busy giving a statement to the officers.

A hard knock on the other window made her jump. The little girl was looking at her, a smug little smile on her lips. Emi quickly turned her head away. She didn’t want to give the kid any more satisfaction. She knocked again, and Emi just thought about her code kata. She lost herself in another world, far away from the police car. Su-Ning would save her. She had absolutely no doubt about it as she went over the programming tasks in her head. She closed her eyes and held her head up high. After a while, she no longer heard the tapping on the window or the two officers who got in and started the engine.

As the car moved through the streets, Emi looked out the window blankly. Officer Daniels tried to comfort her but she didn’t really pay much attention to him. Her mind was spinning with what she remembered about this militant-like island. She remembered Su-Ning mentioning how tough they were on crime to prevent mafia activity. Emi suspected that there was a real chance that she was about to be collateral damage in a system designed to reduce extreme crime. She hoped that was not true. This could be bad, she thought. She was in a foreign country and it was terrifying to think about what might happen, so she just blocked it all out. Surely Su-Ning can do something. She has power. She is making a resort on the island. Su-Ning will save her. Maybe it was wishful thinking, but Su-Ning was the only one she seemed to be able to pin her hopes on.

**— Confessions —**

Emi was brought into a building that looked like a community center turned into a police station. It was hardly what she had expected. Inside, however, looked like a normal police station. At least, from what she had seen on TV. She had never actually been in a police station before.

They wasted no time getting her quickly booked and fingerprinted. After that, they led her to an exam room.

Inside a burly Filipino cop handed her a paper gown. “Put this on,” he said, grabbing some rubber gloves. He pulled them on and then waited for her with his big arms crossed.

Emi could only look at him in disbelief. “Undress in front of you?” she asked shocked. Then after a moment, she added: “You get to do THAT to me?”

“I heard that you are fairly relaxed about nudity,” he said. “You can start by handing me your swimsuit.”

Emi shook her head, emphatically. “Don’t you have female staff for that?” she said, not believing this situation at all. There is no way this was happening to her. Her heart rate suddenly went up.

His shoulders slumped for a moment and picked up his radio. “Prisoner requests female staff for a cavity search,” he stated, sounding disappointed, as if someone had just taken away his fun.

Emi sighed in relief. Would he have cavity searched her if she hadn’t said anything? The very thought of it made her shudder.

A minute later a middle-aged woman came in and smacked the burly cop upside the head.

He ignored the swat, taking one last long look at Emi in her swimsuit before he finally turned and left.

The cavity search was unpleasant, but at least it was quick. The female guard took away her Apple Watch, which made her feel even more cut off from the outside world – if that was possible. She hoped that Su-Ning got her message from Officer Daniels.

The guard tossed her her suit back, along with some red coveralls. Emi assumed that she was allowed to wear both so she quickly put the suit on and the coveralls. The guard then led her back out into the hall.

Emi could clearly feel that she wasn’t a real person with rights here. The police were just doing their job, but she was a potential ‘convict’ and she was treated as such. It felt horrible. In their eyes, she could see that she had already been convicted. She was simply a criminal, not a person anymore. She was just a thing that had to be taken care of. It was a horrible feeling to be seen that way. She wondered if this experience was going to change her.

The female cop lead her along the hallway of mostly empty cells, holding Emi carefully out in front of herself as if Emi was potentially dangerous. One cell along the way had a young woman leaning casually against her cell door. “What the hell!” she said to Emi, angrily. “You had better not be…”

“Quiet!” The female guard banged the cell door with her baton that magically appeared in her hand.

The loud bang on her door didn’t phase the girl at all. Instead, she defiantly put her forehead to the bars and stuck out her studded tongue.

Emi wondered what that was all about as the guard pushed her along. She almost tripped as she was suddenly shoved into a cell. The big steel door closed with a heavy clank. Emi just stood there for a while, uncertain what to do. Finally, she sat down on the lower bunk bed and looked around. It was well furnished. It had a toilet, a sink, and a bunk bed. Emi looked again at the toilet. It was within full view of anyone walking by. She supposed prisoner modesty was sacrificed so they didn’t have to escort people out of the cell all the time. Probably to enhance the safety of the guards too, Emi thought. This place probably was designed with the mafia in mind. There was a single roll of toilet paper on the floor near the wall next to the toilet. She wondered if prison had a luxury such as toilet paper. She was really glad that she didn’t have to use the toilet right now. But she knew that could change anytime. It was an unpleasant thought.

After these observations, she kept thinking the same thing over and over. Su-Ning will come for me. She will save me. Don’t worry. Everything will be alright. It was a big misunderstanding. She was innocent. She sat down on the lower bunk bed, trying to summon strength. Trying to fight back feelings of despair. Trying to not cry.

An hour later a rugged-looking old cop with messy black hair handcuffed her through the bars and then opened her cell and lead her to a door marked ‘Interrogation Room’. Emi didn’t like the name on the door. Was she going to be grilled like some police drama?

Inside was Su-Ning! She had never been so happy to see anyone in her entire life.

Beside her was a tall sharply dressed skinny woman with little round glasses. She had short black hair that was combed straight back. She just looked at Emi with an aura of confidence and intelligence. Emi felt like she was being sized up.

“Oh Emi! Are you alright?” said Su-Ning, trying to come and hug Emi.

“Sit down miss,” said the big cop as he locked Emi to a big metal ring in the center of a heavy industrial looking metal table. The table seemed to be bolted to the concrete floor. Emi had to leave her arms out on the table. Now she REALLY knew what it felt like to be a criminal, she thought, looking up to the mirrored window high up on the wall.

Everyone waited for the cop to leave. Once the door was shut Su-Ning leaped up and hugged Emi. Chained up like this, Emi couldn’t return the hug but she felt an enormous lift with that hug. She started to get emotional but then pushed it down. She wanted to look strong for Su-Ning, if possible.

“Don’t worry Emi, we will get you out of here,” Su-Ning said, reassuringly.

Those were the exact words that Emi had waited to hear.

“Or we will try to reduce the charges at least,” said the other girl, looking down at some printout. “This looks pretty bad Su-Ning.”

“What do you mean bad?” Su-Ning asked, looking at the unusually tall woman.

“Hi, Emi – I’m Fang,” said Fang, showing a big smile that had some crooked teeth typical of Japanese women, except, she obviously wasn’t Japanese. Her fangs were particularly big. She held out her hand within reach of Emi’s locked hand. “I’m your lawyer. I was hired by Su-Ning.”

Emi took her hand gratefully, making a noisy, chain rattling, handshake. Emi sensed the girl was an athlete. It wasn’t just her character that seemed strong. Emi was happy to see her.

Fang sat down and let them know what was up. The charges were many and some of them serious. Trespassing, indecent exposure, theft from a minor, theft over 1000, personal property damage over 1000, property damage to a sacred grave shrine, littering on a sacred grave shrine and assault causing bodily harm. All in all, the charges together could easily max out to over 5 years in prison.

Emi knew it was bad, but not this bad. She froze as the words played over in her head, again and again. This was really bad.

Su-Ning’s eyes started to look watery. “Oh Emi, what did you do?” she asked, hiding her face to wipe it quickly.

Emi was horrified. The combination of Fang’s words and Su-Ning’s reaction triggered a deep fear that rolled over her entire body, causing her skin to get goosebumps. She felt weak, like she could throw up.

Su-Ning covered Emi’s hands supportively. It was a small gesture but was enough to help Emi begin breathing again.

Fang, the lawyer, continued. “Tomorrow will be tough. Likely the prosecutor is going to come out strong and harsh and accuse Emi of lots of false things and try to make Emi look really bad. They will do this so that when we fight back we have to fight the extra accusations as well as the actual charges. That will be their tactics. It’s pretty standard.”

Emi thought about those last words. ‘It’s pretty standard.’

“So tell us everything. Start from the beginning,” said Fang, taking out her notebook and recorder.

For the next couple hours or so Emi mustered the strength to speak and let them both know everything. There was no space for modesty anymore. Emi instinctively knew that she needed to share every possible piece of info in order to help in any way possible. Except, she didn’t elaborate on her nude explorations in detail. Her backstory was basically that she had been daring herself with bigger and longer sessions of nudity up at Lookout Point, in order to challenge her fears. Her last session, however, ended with this very unfortunate and humiliating disaster.

Su-Ning smiled sympathetically at that last part.

Fang was busy taking notes but also smiled slightly about that last part. Emi thought it was cool that she was called Fang and also actually had small fang tips that hung out of her smile sometimes, like as if she was a serious coiled viper, ready to strike her opponents. Emi hoped she was as strong as she appeared to be.

After Emi finished, Su-Ning seemed quiet and serious. “I thought you were just tanning near the gate all those times. The construction workers told me that the gate had been completed. Well, they said there was a hinge they were waiting on, but other than that it was supposed to be completed. I already paid them out in full. But that’s not important right now.”  She ran her hands through her messy hair while looking down at Emi’s locked hands.

Emi just realized that Su-Ning must have dropped everything to get here quickly with Fang. She hadn’t even wasted a single moment to fix her hair.

Su-Ning continued. “I think this is a political play, she is a rival resort owner and even though her daughter did drown on that beach 7 years ago, it wasn’t until I started making this resort last year that she decided to up and buy that small beach, effectively cutting off Lookout Point and the ideal hidden beach from my resort. These charges are exaggerated. She probably already knows how good Emi is through our shared marketing company. She just wants to take away my ‘Director of Software’ to hurt my progress, once again. This is totally political.”

Emi shook her head. “I think she is still mourning her daughter. I saw her seriously praying at the shrine when nobody knew I was there. Plus she really freaked out at me when I was trying to get my swimsuit, which was behind some plants in the shrine. Her bodyguard had to protect me from her kicks.”

“Jesus… what a mess Emi,” Su-Ning lamented, flopping her head forward into her hands as if her neck was no longer strong enough.

Emi didn’t like seeing Su-Ning like this. “I’ll be ok. So I have to work in from a cell for a while,” Emi said, trying to downplay the situation. “Less fun in the sun, more work. Maybe I will get more done.”

Fang shook her head. “There are no computers allowed in prison. The place is a hell hole that was designed to scare mafia members from committing crimes on the island. A couple years ago a tourist got a 2-year sentence and he just couldn’t take it anymore and hanged himself after just over a year.”

Su-Ning suddenly looked up at Fang. “You’re not helping!” she admonished, glaring at her.

“She needs to know the stakes,” Fang stated. “Her life is on the line, literally.”

Emi watched as they both turned and look at her. She didn’t know how to respond, so she just remained quiet. After a moment of awkward silence, she looked down at her chained hands.

Fang went on to say that the court system is different here. It’s very fast and will likely all be over with tomorrow since there is no more evidence. She will prepare the defense tonight.

Su-Ning added that every moment is precious now, we can’t waste time with visitors. Focus is critical. She will let Becca and the girls know what’s happening tomorrow after we see out how this all shakes out. In the meantime, she will just let the team know that Emi took a day off to visit with Su-Ning.

There was more talk after that but Emi couldn’t remember any of it. She was deeply exhausted, both emotionally and physically, and just wanted to go to sleep. Eventually, the guard came and led her back to her cell and she collapsed on the lower bunk bed. She lay there for a moment, looking at the bed above her. Fortunately, her brain was quickly shutting down and soon she was asleep.

Emi woke up under an ugly grey blanket that felt rough but clean. She knew exactly where she was. Jail. Suddenly all the horrific details hit her like a brick wall. She closed her eyes, hoping to go back to sleep again. Back to the comfort of nothingness. But that was now impossible as her mind had started spinning in all directions. She fought it, trying to keep her mind and breathing under control.

The blanket smelled like lemons. She wondered if it was washed with dish soap. She tried to not think about where she was or what was going to happen. She didn’t want to torture herself. Whatever was going to happen would just happen. Instead, she remained in bed, listening to the sounds of the Jail.

She could hear a couple of guards chatting in the distance. Talking about baseball for a while. Then one mentioned the new girl. Emi’s ears perked up. Were they talking about her?

“What’s she in for?”

“Apparently she assaulted Wang and desecrated her daughter’s grave. Supposedly, she also stole and then destroyed her granddaughters’ expensive phone.”

“You gotta be shit’n me. That innocent looking thing?”

“Yeah, and get this… she was stark naked while she did all that.”

“I don’t believe it. She’s Japanese right? Timid and all that?”

“I kid you not, it’s true.”

“What was it, revenge? Did Wang destroy her family business or something? We are talking about THE Wang right?”

“Yes, THE Wang, not the janitor,” he chuckled. “No, I think it was just a random encounter.”

“That doesn’t make sense.”

“When does stuff ever make sense around here?”

They both laughed and then went back to talking about baseball.

Despite her best efforts, Emi’s heart-rate started to accelerate. She turned over, under her blanket and thought about her life. What had she accomplished? It was not a bad run for 24 years old. She remembered all the good times with her old crew. God, she wished that she had stayed with them or at least hadn’t left the country. Everything was so dangerous outside of the US. Initially, it had all been such fun with Becca and the girls; however, given the mess she suddenly found herself in, she now regretted everything.

She knew it would be wrong to blame her team. She had only herself to blame. She was the one who had decided to go streaking outside of the safe resort area. She was the one with the nudity complex that she was trying to get a handle on. She was the one who had mistakenly thought that a grave was a shrine of deity worship. It looked like a shrine, it was in a public place like a shrine. Why did Wang’s daughter have a grave that looked like a shrine?

This whole thing was so unfair! Her intentions had been noble. She tried to save a little girl’s life and then escape with her modesty intact. Now it seemed as if she were headed for prison. Possibly for years. Years! And without a computer. Not being able to use a computer or have her daily run is more than punishment. It’s something that could very well destroy her. Fang was right. This is pretty bad. She would never kill herself, that she knew, but who would she be after years in prison?

She thought about prison life. She was not very outgoing. Die-hard prison women would likely eat her for breakfast. She’s in good shape but she was not a fighter. She wouldn’t be able to run away from the unsavory individuals she’d meet. She wondered if some big butch lesbian would… NO! She decided to stop thinking of such things. If they were going to hurt her. If pain and suffering were going to be a part of her daily life then she didn’t need to also hurt herself. She knew that if she gave in to utter despair then it would be the beginning of the end for her. She knew that. But this was all too much to process.

Also, some of her technical skills would become obsolete. She would need time to get back to where she should be and that would be weaker than if she had not gone to prison in the first place. What about work? Would she have a criminal record in the US? All of her focused hard work over many years, that advantage erased. Would she be a shadow of her former self? Lucky to even get work. This might not kill her body, but she might be dead on the inside, eaten up from within by the injustice of it all.

She should have known that the small beach was off-limits. That gate-less gate should have been a huge clue. No wonder nobody was ever there. It was a private beach, just like the lying girl had told her. She thought about that kid. The memory of her smiling through the window was chilling. Who was responsible for raising such a child? Whoever they were, they were definitely making a monster.

She had been caught naked on a beach. Literally caught! It had been so deeply humiliating to be tackled by a man. And then having him sit on her out in public while two teens took pictures of her. He seemed like a fair man. He had protected her from Wang’s kicks and had taken the phones from the teens. She hoped that he was savvy enough to delete those pictures permanently. She remembered that he had seemed amused half of the time. He must have seen every part of her body. The teen boy also seemed to have enjoyed looking at her. She wasn’t sure what the teen girl had been so excited about.

All of that had been traumatic enough. But then the police had come. Three cars! There were policemen everywhere and they handcuffed her while nude! It was beyond humiliating and then Officer Daniels had seen her completely naked and handcuffed. He no doubt saw everything as he helped her get dressed. The whole thing could have been one of those stories that Evan liked so much.

She knew that Evan would probably love a story like this. If she wasn’t in so much trouble maybe she could laugh at it a little perhaps, and loosen up. But she WAS in a lot of trouble and this could very well be the end of her bright future. Perhaps not, but the risk was definitely there. At the very least, she was definitely going to be set back in her career. This Wang person was apparently powerful and she had managed to insult her profoundly, her family as well. It hurt so much knowing that all of her hard work and sacrifice, her professional reputation for all these years, will likely be damaged or destroyed.

She was in SO much trouble. Why had she thought it was a shrine? Why didn’t it look like a grave? The culture here was different or Wang was trying to keep it from being obvious that it was her daughter’s grave.

She pulled the blanket off her head for some more air. The whole place was blurry as she blinked away her tears. She felt them stream down her face. A few of them even going into her ears. Suddenly she was tired again. The darkness was coming. The sweet darkness.

“Breakfast!”

The words startled Emi and she sat up suddenly.

A food cart, pushed by a female officer, was just outside of the bars. It reminded Emi of how food was served on a plane, only she didn’t get to choose. It was also similar to airplane food, but that was better than she had been expecting. She didn’t have much appetite, but she knew she would need the energy. After eating, she decided to quickly do her business on the toilet before someone came. Then she went back to sleep.

Sometime later a male guard came for her. “Time to get up. Put your arms out here so I can cuff them.”

Emi tried to get her bearings. She had just woken up abruptly. The guard was waiting impatiently with the cuffs. He was the same big burly cop that had been hoping to give her the cavity search the day before.

“Let’s go. Time to go to court.”

“Court? Can I clean up for a moment?” Emi asked, looking at the sink on the wall and then back at the cop.

He lifted up his radio. “We will be a couple minutes, the prisoner wants to clean up,” he said into the device.

Emi took that as a yes and quickly splashed some water on her face and tried to comb her oily, ratty hair with her fingers. She did what she could, but it wasn’t good enough for court. She hated this system. Not fair in so many ways. How was she going to be able to get a fair hearing if she looked like a homeless gypsy? Finally, after three minutes, she was ready. She hoped she looked okay. There was no way to tell. There was no mirror.

The guard seemed patient. Emi was glad for that one little thing as she finally let him handcuff her through the bars. He opened the cell and led her down the hallway. Along the walls were pictures of cops at various sporting events. Outside a police car was waiting.

They drove for thirty minutes or so until they came to a surprisingly large city. Train tracks ran parallel to the highway. A passenger train slowly passed them.

The downtown area reminded her of other cities she had known. It wasn’t much different. Except that everyone had black hair. The people were mostly Asian, with the odd Filipino here and there.

Eventually, they rolled up to what looked to be a legal building. There was a huge iron statue of a naked angel holding two sacks on either side of her, just outside the main doors.

The inside didn’t look quite as fancy as the outside, it seemed more like a small-town courthouse.

“Emi!” Su-Ning called out, waving her over. The guard led them into a meeting room where Fang was sitting surrounded by papers.

Emi didn’t smile or respond. She was scared. It was all she could do to just be there. She sat down and the guard locked her up to a similar-looking industrial strength table.

Fang was quickly explaining what she had prepared, addressing Su-Ning primarily.

Emi listened for a while, but gradually her mind drifted to darker thoughts. She imagined herself pushing a food cart for a living. One day someone gives her a small tip and she eagerly takes it, overly delighted. The thought made her smile slightly.

Su-Ning and Fang exchanged a concerned look.

“Thank you for all this,” Emi said, noticing their reaction. Trying to act more as would be expected of a prisoner in court. She was beginning to feel a disconnect from the whole situation. She was trying to keep it together.

Fang spent some time coaching Emi on how to best handle prosecutor questions that she expected would be asked. Emi hated everything about it, but it was important, that she knew. She concentrated hard, trying to remember everything.

Finally, the guard came for her. It was time to find out her fate.

The courtroom wasn’t as big as Emi had been expecting judging from the outside of the building. The judge was a bald Filipino man, with thin white eyebrows and no expression on his long face. Emi wondered how many members of the mafia he had dealt within his lifetime.

Wang was already there as they entered. She was dressed formally and looked queen-like with her white hair and expensive-looking robes. She was accompanied by her granddaughter and Tam, her ex-cop bodyguard/chauffeur. The prosecutor was a sharp-looking middle-aged man with a high-quality suit. A court reporter and bailiff were the only other two people in attendance.

Emi sat down, cuffed. She was glad that they didn’t chain her to anything.

The first volley of questions asked of Emi went exactly as Emi expected and she answered those quite well.

Next, she had to admit much more than she wanted to about why she was at that beach and naked. She had to talk about her fear of public nudity. Working at a nudist resort wasn’t easy and some of her co-workers were working harder than she was at trying to fit in and understand the concept better from a user perspective. That meant full or partial nudity. Something that Emi admitted that she couldn’t do around other people. Her shortcomings were slowly wearing on her. A lack of first-hand knowledge and also not being a fearless team leader. So she decided to practice being nude alone and slowly work towards conquering her fears. The beach seemed abandoned as she’d never seen anyone in the many weeks of running there every day for exercise, so one day she’d decided to just try it. It was embarrassing, but she had felt the need to push herself.

The prosecutor interrupted her. “We have some evidence that disproves what you are saying,” he said, pointing to the white wall behind Emi. “We have a photo of the crime scene,” he said, clicking his clicker. The white wall suddenly lit up. ”Does this look like a timid person embarrassed by nudity!”

Emi looked back and to the right. Projected on the wall was a lifesize photo that showed her naked and handcuffed. Fortunately, her hands had been handcuffed in front, but they were barely covering half of her pussy. Everyone was looking at the picture. The whole room. She gasped out loud and brought her cuffed and chained hands up to her mouth and felt her face turn blisteringly hot. Her eyes quickly filled with water. She covered her eyes. “Please turn it off,” she pleaded through her hands, a deep embarrassment in her wavering voice.

The Judge ordered the prosecutor to take it down. He complied.

The court waited patiently for Emi to recover. Finally, Emi looked up at everyone, her face still bright red.

The prosecutor seemed unhappy. Wang’s granddaughter was smiling and excited. Everyone else was expressionless. Emi was distraught.

After a few more battles between the litigators, Fang managed to get rid of all the frivolous charges that they had heaped on, but she didn’t have any luck when it came to the more legitimate charges.

Fang came back to Emi and Su-Ning and whispered an apology to the both of them. “The remaining charges could still result in a sentence of approximately four years,” she said.

Su-Ning was furious. “Fang, put me on the stand as a character witness,” she demanded.

Fang did so, asking her a couple of questions about Emi. After doing so Su-Ning spoke her mind to the court.

She emotionally blasted Wang for blowing things all out of proportion just to damage her business and hurt an American. “How will this affect business for all of us? Tossing a talented US software developer in prison just because she wanted to go skinny dipping near a nudist resort?? Imagine the press, all of it bad! This will hurt tourism for years on this island. Over 50% of resort-based revenue comes from US visitors. Emi is just a working tourist, and she is being treated as if she were a terrorist! Come to your senses Wang, put an end to this stupid, profit-destroying circus now!”

Emi was glad to see Su-Ning stand up for her so vehemently. However, nobody seemed to think much of the outburst and things continued as if she hadn’t even spoken. Well, at least the judge seemed to have sympathetic eyes. Wang looked a little uncomfortable, but then her stubborn visage returned. The prosecutor just smiled.

Furious, Su-Ning pulled out her phone and stepped out of the courtroom.

Fang then went on the offensive, attacking the assault charge head-on. She described what actually happened, how Wang had assaulted Emi and wouldn’t let go of her hair. Emi had just shaken her head and pulled Wang’s hands-off. Wang had been behaving irrationally, attacking Emi because she didn’t know she was only just trying to reach for her swimsuit. Her swimsuit! She wasn’t trying to desecrate the shrine. She didn’t even know it was a grave! Fang then asked to see medical information about the injury. Wang didn’t even have a bruise to show. In the end, the assault charge was dropped.

Emi was glad to see that Fang had some real bite. She was an intelligent, aggressive lawyer!

Su-Ning came back in with a Bluetooth in her ear. She seemed to be quietly arguing with someone. “Do you have any idea what that car means to me? My father gave it to me for graduation,” she whispered to someone on the phone. “Three months… what no way, okay, 6 months… Not going to happen.”

Emi didn’t know what was going on with Su-Ning. Meanwhile, Fang was trying to get the theft and destruction of property charges dropped. That wasn’t going particularly well. The young girl told an incredible, but an entirely false story that somehow seemed mildly believable.

Su-Ning looked around incredulously. “Take it or leave it, cousin…” She hung up suddenly. “God damn that slimy bastard,” she cursed quietly.

“I think we’re down to three years,” Fang whispered to Su-Ning and Emi, apologetically.

Su-Ning ignored her and called back with her Bluetooth. “One year. That’s my final offer. Whatever. One year and free visitation rights. You buy your own food though. Okay, good. Now tell me everything. Hurry up as this is almost over,” she said with a hushed voice, covering her mouth with her hand.

Emi wondered what was going on. Fang squeezed Emi’s hand and looked at Su-Ning with intense interest.

The prosecutor sat down and started leafing through his notes.

Su-Ning marched over to Wang and sat beside her and whispered something in her ear. The older lady suddenly went stone-faced and looked at Su-Ning defiantly, her eyes blazing. Su-Ning ignored her and came back to sit next to Emi.

“What’s going on?”, Emi whispered.

Su-Ning ignored Emi and just watched Wang who was conferring quietly with the prosecutor. Soon after that the prosecutor looked at the Judge and announced that they were dropping all of the most serious charges.

Su-Ning, who still had a wild look in her eyes, looked at Emi briefly.

“I estimate that we are now down to a year of community service,” Fang whispered.

Emi felt her heart skip a beat. Hope and relief surged within her. That was interrupted however by an angry growl from across the room. Wang was talking with her granddaughter, who was nodding continually.

The prosecutor stepped forward once again. “While Wang has dropped her charges, I would like to add some charges directly from Miss Li, Wang’s granddaughter.” He went on to describe the same serious charges from the child, the various charges related to her phone being stolen and destroyed by being thrown into the ocean.

Emi sighed, slouching down a little. This roller coaster was driving her insane.

“Probably back up to two years,” Fang mumbled, looking irritated at this sudden turn of events. “Su-Ning what did you do?”

“We can talk later. My cousin had some dirt on Wang’s son,” Su-Ning said, looking irritated while glaring at the little girl.

Emi felt as if she was dangerously close to passing out. This whole thing was getting to be too much for her.

Fang smiled. “I have an idea,” she said, looking at the ex-cop. She called to have Tam, put on the stand. She asked him about his duties and if he was in charge of protecting the family and keeping track of them. He said yes, and she asked him for his phone. He looked up at the Judge. The Judge nodded, and he handed the phone to Fang.

“Can you unlock it for me please?” Fang asked.

He again looked to the Judge who nodded. Fang took the iPhone and navigated to some screen. Suddenly there was a loud ping near Wang and her granddaughter. The girl hopped up. She was startled and turned pale.

Fang then explained to the court that she had guessed that he was tracking the girl with ‘find my iPhone’ in order to keep her safe. The girl had actually had the gall to bring the phone with her to court! Fang added, that it hadn’t really mattered; had she not had the phone with her, the map would have shown the phone’s true location, requiring only that it be operational and turned on.

As the girl had been shown to be lying, the prosecution had no choice but to drop all theft and property charges from the child. Wang looked furious. The prosecutor mumbled a lame excuse about how the child had seemed believable. As a professional, he apologized to Emi. Wang did not follow suit and apologize. Instead, she stared straight ahead, a look of displeasure on her face. Once the prosecutor had completed his apology, Wang glanced over at him and scowled.

Fang sat back down next to Su-Ning and Emi. “Back down to just community service,” she said, showing a toothy grin.

Emi’s hopes surged yet again. She swore to herself that if another reversal were to occur, that she’d go completely insane!

After some more deliberations and back and forth battles, it seemed like this is where things were going to stick. Emi was found guilty of the remaining charges.

Next up was sentencing specifics. Or more specifically, what kind of community service would Emi have to perform for the coming eleven months.

Fang explained that typically both litigators wrote down some suggestions until they arrived at something that both could agree upon.

The first suggestion was ‘cleaning the beaches’: four hours a day, eight on the weekends, for most of the beaches around the entire island. She would be given a small utility vehicle. It would also include cleaning within all the private beaches of each resort. This was the most common community service.

Another suggestion was ‘Resort Helper’: She would have to do a week of labor, at each resort, cycling to the next resort after seven days. That would include Su-Ning’s resort as well. There were five resorts on the island, not including Su-Ning’s unopened resort.

The head of the penalty committee, a short man with a black beard, read from a paper. There were a few other suggestions but it was agreed to ignore street cleaning and other similar tasks. Both sides agreed that her community service should take place around the beaches or resorts.

Wang started speaking to the court. Emi couldn’t understand the Mandarin spoken and assumed that Wang only knew how to speak fluently with the one language. It took Wang awhile to get it all out.

Su-Ning translated, Wang said that she now has a permit for clothing-optional on her resort. Wang insisted that Emi might have to sometimes be nude while doing special duties on her resort’s beach.

Emi didn’t like the sound of that. It sounded horrific, actually. Su-Ning got up and argued furiously against it and pushed for cleaning of the beaches instead. Wang ignored Su-Ning and spoke briefly with the judge privately.

The judge spoke up. “Wang won’t be satisfied unless the punishment involves nudity in some form, public nudity. However, since this island is governed by law and there is no precedent upon which to model a punishment involving court-ordered nudity, the court can only grant Wang the ability to dictate a state of dress while Emi is on her premises. We can’t say what that state of dress will be, however. It will just need to fit the circumstances and the location. So if Emi is on a clothing-optional beach…”

Fang interrupted the judge, arguing aggressively that placing Wang in charge of Emi’s clothing would be not only cruel but also a recipe for disaster. Emi would be treated vindictively. Wang would no doubt go too far. She already tried to rip out Emi’s hair and kick her. Finally, the Judge agreed and stated normal ‘fully-dressed’ street cleaning will have to be the final punishment unless there are more suggestions.

Wang leaned over and whispered something to the prosecutor.

The prosecutor stepped forward. “Recently Su-Ning’s resort posted an open position for Resort Ambassadors. It is a community service position that requires full-time nudity. The job includes helping new guests get comfortable with nudity and showing them around the resort and other related activities. What could be better than Su-Ning overseeing her employee’s punishment within the safety of her own resort? This does away with any worry about Wang taking advantage of Emi or the situation. It would also help Wang feel as if justice had been served, if only at a minimal level.”

Su-Ning looked like she couldn’t believe what she was hearing. She went to the front of the room. “I strongly disagree. This would be too much for Emi to handle. Also, we need strong confident Resort Ambassadors otherwise we will lose business. Should my business be punished also? I refuse to allow this as an option. It would cause more harm than good,” Su-Ning added, shaking her head at Wang in disgust.

Wang reached down for something under her seat and then got up and came to the front of the court. She was holding up a large picture showing a gentle-looking middle-aged woman.

Emi guessed that it might be a picture of her late daughter.

Wang then turned, looking at Emi bitterly, saying something deeply emotional but in Mandarin. She ended with an awkward whimper. She weakly pointed a shaking finger at Emi from across the room, glaring at her with old red watery eyes. No translation was needed; everyone in the court knew exactly what Wang was saying.

Emi, taken aback, gulped and blinked a few times in surprise.

The powerful and proud Wang suddenly looked like nothing more than a mother in pain. The dignity of her daughter was at stake. Her raw emotional display was indeed moving.

Emi felt responsible. She suddenly realized that she wasn’t the only victim in the room. Wang was obviously hurting. Emi could tell that she truly felt that her daughter’s grave had been desecrated. In Wang’s view, something needed to be done to set things right. Wang obviously had sensed her discomfort of nudity and wanted more punishment than just community service. Somehow, it started to feel like a somewhat fair request to Emi, especially considering the prison sentence that she had narrowly avoided. Wang must feel desperate now to get at least a small amount of justice. Emi felt sympathy for her and looked at her handcuffs, mulling over her options.

Su-Ning and Fang were also taken aback about Wang’s emotional display. Su-Ning looked at Emi and shook her head subtly. Fang did the same, supporting her employer’s lead.

Emi looked at Wang, knowing that she might come to regret it, she nodded. Getting the judge’s attention, she spoke, “Your honor, I accept Wang’s punishment request.”

Su-Ning looked at Emi in shock and reached for her, but Emi sidestepped her still facing the court.

“I’ll be a Resort Ambassador for Su-Ning,” she said loud enough for all to hear, disbelieving the very words as they came out of her mouth.

Su-Ning’s mouth hung open in shock. “No… Emi, I need ambassadors, but this is too much for you. I know you too well to be able to believe that this is something that you’ll be able to do,” Su-Ning pleaded, holding Emi empathetically by the shoulders. “Seriously, I don’t think you can do it. You will regret it. You don’t have to do this. Your nervousness will tear you apart and will make my guests uncomfortable. It’s lose-lose.”

Emi knew that Su-Ning had a point, and yet she felt she had to convince Su-Ning (and herself) that this was the best path. Her gut told her that this was the right path, considering the limited options. She just needed her mind to catch up and make sense of it all.

If there was one thing Emi was good at, it was figuring out an optimal course of action. This was far from ideal, but it was optimal. Her team would be there to support her in a safe environment. That was immeasurably better than risking eleven months under Wang’s control or having to be outside in the strong sun so many hours, risking skin cancer. She would definitely prefer to be under Su-Ning’s wing, rather than Wang’s thumb. Being mostly inside an air-conditioned building would be healthier. Plus recently she admired Becca for her personal strength and bravery. Emi realized that her own confidence had been slowly building, but progress was slow.

It was a simple choice really. Resort Ambassador. Then she could theoretically accelerate her growth. She tried to imagine herself unashamed of her body, happy and proud, like Becca. She wanted to deserve the mantle of leadership, not just have it handed to her. She had to lead by example. These were exciting but scary thoughts, there was so much to process.

Su-Ning shook her again.

“I can do it,” Emi said firmly, trying to show confidence.

“I don’t get it Emi. You nearly died when they showed your nude photo here in the courtroom,” said Su-Ning, making an exasperated expression. “My God, Emi… think this through!”

“That was different,” Emi insisted. “Showing those images HERE was inappropriate and shocking, to say the least.”

Su-Ning looked like she couldn’t believe what she was hearing.

Emi continued to explain. “In a nudist resort, it’s completely different. Nudity us safe and expected there. There you have support and it’s normal. I can do it Su-Ning.”

Su-Ning frowned, she didn’t look convinced.

Fang and the rest of the court watched the two of them as their battle of wills continued. “I think you guys need a moment,” Fang said. She asked the court for a short break and it was granted.

Emi led Su-Ning to the corner of the room where they could speak privately.

Emi took a deep breath and looked into Su-Ning’s eyes. “I’ll make you proud Su-Ning. I’ll be the best goddam Resort Ambassador ever. I promise,” she said, tearing up. She needed this. She needed to get that woman off her back. She needed to make amends for what she had done to her daughter’s grave. It had all been a big mistake but the pain she caused to the woman was real. She wanted to pay for that. Besides, she would have a lot of support. Becca, Hannah, topless staff, and the resort itself was a safe no-camera zone with great in-house food. Just a short time ago, she had been looking at years in prison, and now, instead of cleaning up the beaches on the whole island or serving Wang personally, she could just be around good people in a safe area and finally conquer her insecurities, once and for all. And importantly, her team’s productivity would not fall behind.

“Are you sure?” Su-Ning said, looking doubtful. “This cannot be renegotiated later, should you change your mind. This is serious stuff.”

“I’m sure,” Emi said, smiling as a tear rolled down her face. “You can count on me.”

Emi stepped away from Su-Ning and stood in front of Wang at the front of the room. She bowed politely. “I accept your punishment,” she said bowing even lower. “I apologize to you and your daughter. Please forgive me! Onegaishimasu!” Emi stayed low, realizing that she had accidentally said a Japanese word. It was an embarrassing mistake, but she was sincere. Hopefully Wang could sense that.

Wang listened as her prosecutor translated.

Emi could only see her and Wang’s feet, and an occasional teardrop traveling to splat on the floor between them.

The room was quiet as Emi held the deep bow for some time.

Finally Emi heard Wang utter a bit of Mandarin, which was quickly translated. “The prosecution accepts and agrees with the punishment. Wang also appreciates Emi’s gesture of remorse. This matter is now resolved.”

Emi was still bowing low. She truly felt sorry for her actions. Had she heard that right? She tentatively stood up and looked at Wang, wiping her eyes.

Wang scowled for a while at Emi with her own wet eyes. No hint of warmth there, but then she nodded subtly to Emi and turned to leave.

Emi suddenly realized it was now over. She started to stumble, but Su-Ning and Fang caught her, leading her back to her chair. It was over. It was over. The thought kept repeating in her head, like a programmatic loop.

Su-Ning and Fang shook hands, smiling.

Later, after Emi returned the jumpsuit, wearing just her bikini again, she went outside of the building where Su-Ning and Fang were waiting for her. They both thanked Fang and said goodbye to her as she jumped into a cab. Su-Ning led Emi to her yellow jag and opened the door for her. Su-Ning went around the outside of her car, slowly looking at it and finally sat down inside and hugged her steering wheel for a moment before starting the engine and pulling out from the parking lot.

“So you have to give your car to your cousin for a year?” Emi asked, hoping that was not the case.

“Yes. It’s no big deal. It’s temporary. I can get another car.”

Emi didn’t say anything. She knew Su-Ning was just being polite. Obviously, Su-Ning cared deeply about her car. Emi felt terrible, she had cost Su-Ning so much trouble and expense. Having to directly face her powerful resort rival under such circumstances had likely been very uncomfortable for her as well. Plus, paying Fang who knows how much money and losing her car for a year. Emi hoped that she would be worth all the trouble. She promised herself to make sure the software was spectacular and to get over her nudity issues. This was Emi 2.0. Becca was soon going to have a challenger on both fronts. Great software and a super Resort Ambassador!

Su-Ning changed the subject. “Becca is going to totally flip when she hears what happened today,” said Su-Ning, chuckling.

“About that… I uhh… I don’t want anyone to know that I am doing mandatory community service with regards to nudity. It will just make the whole thing even more awkward… and difficult for me. I don’t want to share this with anyone.”

“Really?”

“Yes, Nobody. I think that will be the only way I can actually do this,” said Emi, as seriously as she could. “I want to be a co-worker with Becca and the team, not a nude inmate. There is just too much that could go wrong with that kind of info out there.” Emi was mostly thinking to avoid a lot of head games with Sam, but then there was the marketing team. Arg! She had forgotten about them! What a nightmare, she thought!

“Are you sure? They’re your own team, I’m sure they would all be genuinely supportive.”

“No. Absolutely not. If they found out, I would disintegrate. I wouldn’t be able to do it anymore and then I’d be in big trouble.”

“I see… yikes,” Su-Ning said, looking worried. “Okay, then it will be between just the three of us.”

“Three of us?”

“Yes, there needs to be a local resident, on-site, that fills out the monthly community service report to the court. So that makes it Ho, my building manager. I will inform her to tell no one. She is loyal to me, so don’t worry. It will be all good.”

“I… uh… okay, I guess,” Emi reluctantly agreed.

“Don’t worry. You will be fine. Becca will show you the ropes with regards to your side duties. You two seem to be good friends so it should be okay. Ho won’t be ordering you around or anything like that. So relax!”

Emi hoped it was true.

They turned another corner and started down a long straightaway. They pulled down the visors to shield themselves from the sun as it was low in the sky.

Emi felt the pent-up pressure of the last couple days finally breaking through. She suddenly felt as if she had dodged a bullet, or rather, a machine-gun burst and a few grenades, Emi couldn’t contain it anymore and burst into tears. She tried to do it quietly and not disturb Su-Ning as she drove, but eventually, a painful gasp escaped her and Su-Ning looked and saw the rivers under her eyes. She immediately pulled over, unbuckled her seat belt and gave Emi a huge hug.

It must have been contagious, as soon Su-Ning also had wet eyes, but she was also smiling warmly. Emi had no smile, just extreme relief that life as she had known it had not come to an end.

“Thank you Su-Ning,” Emi sobbed. “I will never forget what you did for me today.”

Su-Ning smiled. “You’re welcome. But it wasn’t just friendship, although that was a big part of it. My father once told me that you need to treat your people as if your life depends upon it, because it does.”

Emi wondered what it was like to have such a wise father. Her own father was a selfish professor. Suddenly Emi remembered that Su-Ning’s father was having a serious health issue. She decided to not bring that up.

“Besides, I would feel terrible if anyone working for me got sent to prison. You just came here for a job. You didn’t deserve years in prison for a simple misunderstanding!”

Emi nodded in complete agreement.

“Next, it’s your turn to save MY ass!” Su-Ning said, smiling and starting the car up again. She pulled back onto the road.

“You can count on me,” Emi said firmly, wiping away her tears…

Su-Ning glanced at her with a warm smile while she put on some music. It was soft Chinese opera music with lots of bass strings.

Emi found herself liking the strange music. Outside her window, the sun was setting. The sky looked beautiful, with a soft gradient of red along the skyline.

A while later, Su-Ning stopped next to the resort. “Here we are.”

“Thanks… I guess I’ll… um… go get undressed,” Emi said, dreading the very thought but trying to not show it.

“About that, I talked to the sentencing officer and persuaded her into letting you have a day to prepare yourself. So tomorrow will be just a regular day. You will be dressed as normal.”

“Oh, thank you!” she said, regretting it instantly. She didn’t want to seem overly grateful as she had promised that she could do this.

“No worries. I know this whole thing will be an adjustment for you.”

“No kidding!” Emi laughed, doing her best to show Su-Ning a brave face. “I don’t think that I need to wait a full day. Maybe I’ll surprise everyone at the end of the day tomorrow. I simply won’t get dressed when we finish with the Jacuzzi.”

“I like your style,” Su-Ning said, looking up at the building. “I hope this place treats you well, Emi.”

“I’m sure I’ll be okay. Becca’s been doing this for a while. She will help me get up to speed.”

Su-Ning smiled and waved from her jag as she pulled away.

Emi waved back as the tail lights streaked away.

Inside, Emi went straight to her room. She was lucky to have not met anyone from her team along the way. There would have been questions if they had seen her eyes and messy hair. Relieved, Emi collapsed on her bed like a sack of potatoes.

The next morning Emi woke to the sound of someone banging on her door. She looked at her watch. It was 9 am.

“Hey Superbum, you in there? Let’s go, I need a ride to breakfast!” Sam yelled through the door.