

Where the Code Breaks: The Two Lives of Will Tan

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Prologue

Welcome, dear reader, to a journey into the hidden corners of an ordinary life. We all wear masks, donâ??t we? We present one face to the world â?? our colleagues, our families, the commuters we squeeze against on the MRT â?? while another self might stir beneath the surface, yearning for something different.

Meet Will Tan. To his colleagues at the Singaporean digital marketing agency, heâ??s the quiet, slightly sluggish web designer in his mid-thirties, competent enough but lacking â??oomphâ??. To his parents, in their comfortable Ang Mo Kio HDB flat, heâ??s still their boy â?? single, reliant, needing reminders about dentist appointments and packed lunches. Heâ??s a man who avoids confrontation, swallows his frustrations, and blends into the background noise of the Lion City.

But Will has a secret. A pressure valve. A hidden track running parallel to his predictable life. Several weekends a year, Will Tan vanishes, replaced by â??Whiskeyâ?• â?? a persona who walks the chaotic, neon-lit streets of Bangkok. There, amidst the anonymity and indulgence the city offers, he seeks escape, thrills, and perhaps a taste of the vices he wouldnâ??t dare entertain back home.

This is his story, but itâ??s also *yours* to shape. At the end of each episode, youâ??ll be presented with a choice â?? a poll deciding Willâ??s next move. Your votes will steer the narrative, pushing Will down paths of intrigue, danger, or perhaps even deeper into the mess heâ??s trying to escape.

So buckle up. Willâ??s double life is about to get complicated. Where it leadsâ?¦ is partly up to you.

Episode 1: Mamaâ??s Boy, Bangkok Bound

#F8F8F8. Almost white. Will Tan stared at the hex code, then back at the Slack message from Christy, the project manager. â??Client feels the current background lacks â??oomphâ??. Wants something â??whiter but warmerâ??. Pls adjust ASAP.â•

Will, 35, physically deflated in his chair. Oomph? For an insurance companyâ??s FAQ page background? He ran a hand through his perpetually messy hair, catching a glimpse of his reflection in the monitor: plump cheeks, tired eyes behind smudged glasses, the collar of his slightly-too-small polo tee straining. He looked less like a dynamic web designer and more like someone whoâ??d lost a fight with a duvet.



His phone buzzed. A WhatsApp message from â??Mumâ??: *Will, remember dentist appointment Thursday 3pm. Donâ??t forget! Eat the lunch I packed for you, donâ??t waste money outside.*

He quickly silenced the phone, cheeks flushing slightly. Living at home had its perks â?? free laundry, Mumâ??s cooking â?? but the downsides were mounting. The lack of privacy, the constant nagging, the feeling of being perpetually ten years old. Single, stuck in a job that felt like digital ditch-digging, still getting reminders about dentist appointments.

â??Oi, Will,â• chirped KC from across the aisle, leaning back with infuriating cheerfulness. â??Boss asking about the mockups for MegaMart. Said Christy pinged you like, an hour ago?â•

Will flinched. Confrontation, even mild workplace prodding, made his stomach clench. â??Yah, yah, doing now,â• he mumbled, quickly switching tabs, feeling a familiar surge of resentment. KC, with his

crisp shirt and talk of his upcoming BTO key collection, always seemed to look down on him. Will wouldnâ??t forget it. He never forgot slights. He justâ?¦ didnâ??t do anything about them.

Friday couldnâ??t come soon enough. When 6 PM finally rolled around, Will practically sprinted from the office. Back in the familiar HDB flat, the smell of his motherâ??s sweet and sour pork filled the air.

â??Ah Will, back already? Faster go shower, dinner almost ready,â?• his mother called from the kitchen. His father grunted from the sofa, eyes fixed on the TV.

â??Ma,â?• Will said, trying to sound casual as he edged towards his room. â??This weekend, uhâ?¦ Vincent-lah, his place. Got project need to rush. Overnight.â?• Vincent was a vaguely plausible friend.

His mother paused her chopping. â??Project? Weekend also must work? Aiyah, this companyâ?¦ Eat dinner first, I pack some fruit for you.â?•

â??No need, Ma! Vincent sure got food one.â?• He escaped into his room, grabbing the pre-packed duffel bag from under a pile of old tech magazines. Different clothes, burner phone, Baht, passport. The essentials for becoming someone else.

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After forcing down dinner under his motherâ??s watchful eye (â??Eat more vegetables, Will!â?•), he made his escape. The lie felt flimsy, but his parents were used to his vague explanations.

The journey itself was a deliberate sequence, a shedding of skin between the Lion City and the City of Angels. The cool efficiency of Changi, the low hum of the budget flight â?? each stage loosened the grip of his Singapore self. He watched the islandâ??s neat grid of lights recede below, carrying with it the weight of parental expectation and workplace resentment. With every nautical mile north, the anxious, conflict-avoidant Will Tan faded, making space for the â??Whiskeyâ?? persona already anticipating the heat, the noise, the intoxicating anonymity and release that Bangkok promised.

Landing at Don Mueang was like stepping through a portal. The thick, humid, chaotic energy of Bangkok enveloped him. He navigated the buses and motorcycle taxis like a local, heading for the familiar sanctuary of â??The Wandererâ??s Nookâ?• in Samsen.



â??Khun Whiskey! Welcome back!â?• Auntie, the owner, greeted him with her usual warmth. No questions asked.

â??Sawadee krap, Auntie,â?• Will replied, the â??Whiskeyâ?• alias feeling like comfortable armour. Here, he wasnâ??t the tired web designer whose mother packed his lunch.

He found his usual spot at the canalside eatery, the fiery boat noodles and cheap beer a jolt to his system, washing away the taste of Singaporean routine. Later, nursing a Chang at a dimly lit bar near Phra Athit Road, the simmering resentment he carried seemed to dissipate, replaced by the simple pleasure of anonymity and the freedom to indulge without judgment. No one here knew him, judged him, or told him to eat his vegetables.

He was just starting to relax, truly letting the Bangkok vibe seep in, when the young man in the crisp white shirt appeared.

â??Excuse meâ?¦ Whiskey?â?•

Will froze. This was new. â??Yes?â?• he managed, his voice tight.

The envelope landed softly on the table. â??From Lek. Rattanakosin Exhibition Hall. Tomorrow, 2 PM. Near the entrance.â?• The young man paused, leaning slightly closer. â??She saysâ?¦ bring your â??eyeâ??.â?•

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He gave a quick wai and vanished back into the flow of Phra Athit Road before Will could even process the words. Will stared at the plain, sealed envelope. His Chang suddenly tasted flat, the barâ??s cheerful chatter faded into a dull roar.

Lek? Exhibition Hall? Bring your â??eyeâ??? What did it mean? This wasnâ??t the usual anonymous escape. This feltâ?¦ real. Complicated. Dangerous?

His heart hammered â?? a frantic rhythm of fear mixed with something elseâ?¦ a strange pulse of adrenaline. Part of him, the Will Tan who avoided confrontation, screamed *RUN*. This was exactly the kind of trouble he wasnâ??t equipped to handle. He should tear up the note, retreat to the guesthouse, maybe book the first flight back to safety. Forget Lek, forget the note, forget â??Whiskey.â?•

But another part, fuelled by years of simmering resentment, the part that secretly craved a life less beige, the part that *chose* the alias â??Whiskeyâ?•â?¦ felt a flicker. This was *different*. This wasnâ??t passive consumption; this was an *invitation*. Maybe this was the escape he *really* wanted â?? not just anonymity, but significance? The mystery tugged at his curiosity, even as his gut churned with anxiety.

The envelope sat there, a silent challenge. The Bangkok night pulsed around him. He had to react, right now. The safe path called. The unknown path beckoned.

He picked up the envelope, his fingers trembling slightly. What should he do *tonight*?

READER POLL: WHAT SHOULD WILL DO NEXT?



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