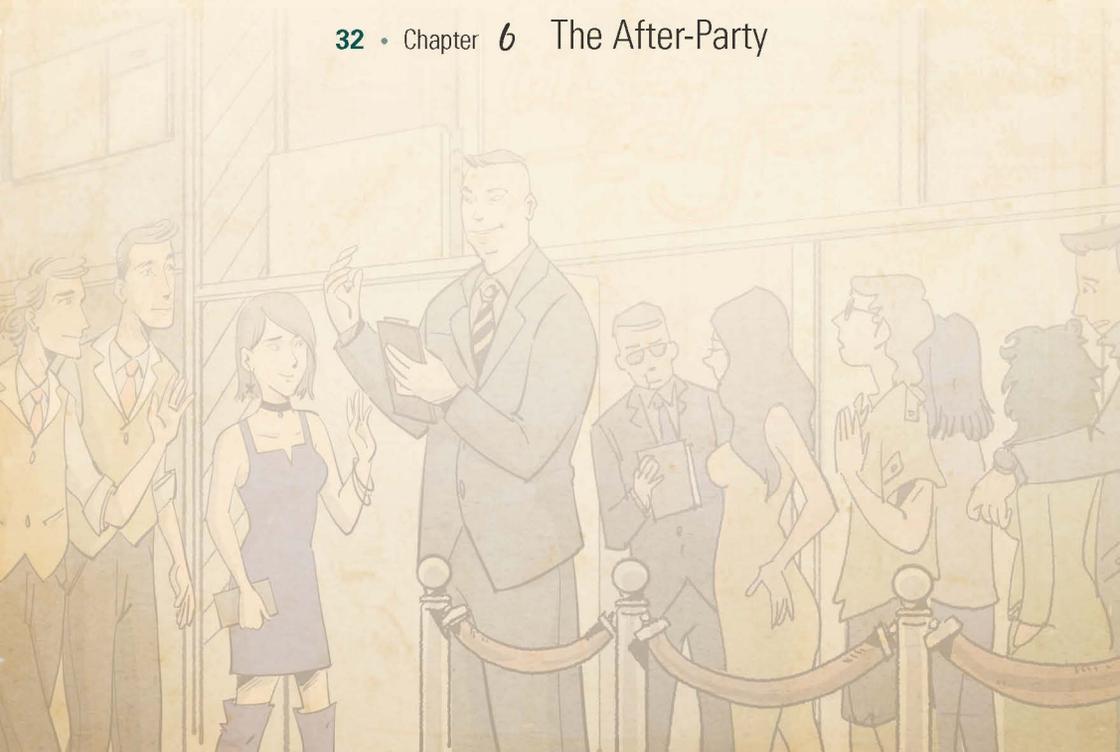


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Breaking a Sweat

Up, one, two, three, four, breathe, five, six, seven, eight, down.

Angela Lin lifted the weight to her body, held it for a second, then put it back down. She had been at Apex Predator Gym since 10:00, and it was now 12:45. She was tired. She would leave in 45 minutes and get a late lunch. She had to push herself, and she worked out every day, six days a week. Some days she would do classes and run. On other days, like today, she would lift weights.



She drank some cold water and started again. Angela liked to close her eyes and listen to music while exercising. Her eyes were closed, and she was working hard when she felt someone touch her. She jumped and turned around. It was a strange guy standing there and smiling at her. She turned off her music.

“What?” she asked him.

“Are you tired?” he replied.

“No, I am not tired. I am very busy working out and focusing. Can I help you with something?”

“I am just trying to tell you that you’re beautiful. You do not need to get mad.”

“Thank you. I am sorry for being angry. You are right, I am beautiful. You see, I am a model, and part of my job is exercising, so I am at work right now and do not have time to talk. Sorry.”

“Kenneth Wu.”

“What?”

“My name is Kenneth Wu. What’s your name, baby?”

“Did you just call me ‘baby’? Did you know it is 2022?”

“Hey, I am sorry, but if I see a beautiful girl, I have to tell her. Is that wrong?”



"It could be wrong."

"Um . . ., what do you mean?"

"Kenneth, I mean it is wrong if it's said at the wrong time, or in the wrong place, or to the wrong person. Do you think when I am trying to work and improve myself that it is the best time?"

"I mean, yes, I don't like to make people angry, but I do like to make . . ."

"I am going to stop you there. This is the wrong time, this is the wrong place, and you are very clearly the wrong guy. Thank you for your nice words, but I have to get back to work, so please, leave me alone."

"You can't talk to me like that. I am a rich lawyer. A girl like you should be happy if a man like me is talking to you. So if you know what is good for you, you would be nice to me."

"T.O.!" Angela called.

"What are you calling T.O. for?" Kenneth asked.

A very, very large man walked up. "Everything OK, Angela?" the man-mountain asked.

"T.O., this man is stopping me from working out," Angela told him.

T.O. looked down at the much smaller man. "Do not talk to people that are not your friends," he told Kenneth.

"Who are you to tell me what to do? Do you know who I am?" Kenneth yelled at T.O.

"My name is Lee Yu-wan. I am the floor **manager** of this gym. Most people call me T.O. as in Tai-Over mainly because I am big. I am the number three MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) fighter in Taiwan, and no, I do not know who you are, or care who you are," T.O. said quietly.

"Oh, I am sorry. I didn't mean to upset you or your girlfriend," Kenneth said.

"She is a girl, she is my friend, but we are not together."

"So I can ask her out?"

"No, she is exercising in my gym. Leave her alone."

"Whatever," Kenneth said as he walked away.

"Sorry, Angela, I hate that guys think they can talk to any girl here."

"You are a good man, T.O."

"I will let you get back to work. If there are any more problems, let me know."

