

# Sung Tieu

206 / THÁNG 3 NĂM 2016

AGES  
JUST A  
NUMBER

TUỔI TÁC  
LÀ...CÁI ĐÌNH!

THỜI TÌNH  
NHÂN NGÀY  
8 THÁNG 3

DIỄN VIÊN  
KIỀU TRINH  
“TÔI SÚC TÌNH V  
VỀ BÀM TRÊN  
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MẮT QUẢN  
HUN, LƯNG  
BẮNG KIỀU

# 0 Hours and 23 Minutes Later

Á HẬU  
DOANH NHÂN  
PHƯƠNG BÉ

ĐIỀU LỚN LAO NHẤT  
ĐÃ LÀM LÀ LẬP  
GIA ĐÌNH VỚI MỘT  
NGƯỜI CHỒNG TỐT



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THỜI TRANG

Trang phục  
**KELLY BUI**



Nhiếp ảnh **TANG TANG**  
Stylist **JOHNNY MACH** Trang điểm & làm tóc **CUTIE**  
Trợ lý **HAI HỒ**



9 hours and 23 minutes later

I arrived early at the glass doors of the hair salon in district one because I didn't want to take my time and loose myself in useless thoughts. It was a smoggy, yet sunny morning outside when I stepped in. I spoke to the boy behind the desk, who greeted me with self-assurance and guided me to the third floor.

Everything inside the room seemed a bit out of date, its decoration slightly profane and used; baby blue stripes of paint along the wall, a retro 90s sofa chair reupholstered in black, magenta curtains on plastic rails next to *Byobu* screens. It seemed the room was used for dying customers' hair. Two massage tables covered with slightly dirty white towels, two make-up trolleys and two standing lamps were hovering around the space. The room had no windows. A lone air conditioner hummed above the entrance door regulating the airflow.

With a generic light blue v-neck t-shirt, jeans tight to a bright brown belt, black shiny sneakers and a glossy golden watch—what appeared to be a *Rolex* look-alike—he walked through the door quietly. I recognized his face from the reception. When he got to the table to sit down, he threw a smile at me, delighted and slightly self-conscious. He immediately turned around and undressed his upper body, folding his t-shirt away. He was young and smooth-skinned. He wore rectangular glasses like the ones you get at *Boots* for five pounds a pair. His thick hair was styled with gel and his quiff haircut gave him a sense of everlasting youth.

We were both waiting. "I am good, thanks!", I replied when he offered me a glass of tap water. I told him that drinking tap water here was not recommended to me. He goes down to the kitchen to get some bottled water for us. He poured me a glass. It was a cool, sweetly flavoured water with strawberry scent that he handed to me. I asked him a few questions about himself, which he answered in short and considered sentences. He was vague, in a casual way, as though he didn't want to give too much away nor appear impolite. He nodded at me several times in response to my inquiries, I noted the deliberateness of his action, but I too let it slide before we kept waiting in silence.

I attempted afresh with a new set of questions, so stark and artificial-sounding as they broke the silence. I stuttered trying to articulate certain words clearly, struggling to get my tongue over the changes from vowels to consonants in Vietnamese. I tried, searching for common ground, to talk to him about the country we both shared, the place I barely remembered I was born in.

It wasn't until 11:20 am when she eventually arrived. She was tall, very tanned, with long dyed brown hair tied back in a pony tail. Her face seemed as though it had been beaten before, but her eyes were so calmly assertive and welcoming that they made this observation seem like a fantastic paranoia. Her skin had a slightly irregular puffiness, it was a little bit out of shape in unexpected areas and her nose seemed confusingly short with burn scars on both sides. Her drawn-on eyebrows and plum red lips were banally revealing of her origins – suburban, grown, wounded and aspirational. She shook my hand in haste as she unpacked her bag with her other hand and neatly placed the items on the trolley: a paint brush, two golden packs filled with liquid, one plastic container, scissors and two towels. She switched on the small light next to the massage table while he smiled at her with what appeared to have been straightforward sincerity.

“So let us start”, she said empathically. She put on her gloves and cut with the scissor through the packaging, pouring pink, translucent liquid into the plastic container.

His back was already facing her when she lifted the soaked brush to direct it towards his body. In thin horizontal lines she applied the on his shoulder, from left to right.

As she stroked his skin with the brush, the room slowly filled with a quietly choking odour – the smell of chlorine and bleach mixed with an artificial scent to make it more bearable.

It took her almost 10 minutes to apply the fluid on his neck, shoulders, upper breast (leaving the nipples themselves untouched), stomach, back, both arms and hands. From time to time she would ask him whether he could breath as normal. He confirmed with a curt “Yes”, his stock response towards her question throughout the day.

She waited another 15 minutes with a lucid knowingness until she applied the next layer of . Meanwhile, she checked her two phones for messages on *Whatsapp*, typing with her glove covered fingers on the touch screen. He sat silently on the table gazing at his flesh. She looked up from her screen and made some jokes here and there lifting the mood ever so slightly.

In the heat of nervousness, rose drops of sweat ran down his shoulder blades turning his skin blushed red. It made his flesh look like that of the *Pink Panther*, artificial, confused and irritated. The air-conditioned wind drifted up his stomach, chest and shoulders revealing his goose bumps.

When she grabbed for the brush again to hold it into the basket for a few seconds, he laughed a little to himself knowingly, displaying even if just for a fraction of a second in the corner of his lips or eyes, his independence, his freedom of will. She walked the brush over his blood-red skin, this time starting at his lower back. She laughed as well because that's better, it's exactly what she





Đam mê nghề người mẫu  
từ năm 15 tuổi và theo  
đuổi phong cách phi giới  
tính, nhưng đây là lần đầu  
tiên Adray Minh (chàng  
trai 23 tuổi đang theo  
học ngành tâm lý giáo

học nghề sinh  
New Zealand)  
minh những  
n chỉ dành  
ai nữ. Sở hữu  
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lịch lam của  
h hay những  
đầy gợi cảm,  
ần cuốn hút  
t tự tin vượt  
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si hạn, chuẩn  
i tính đường  
bi xóa nhòa.

AM GIA KHANG









wanted to do to calm him. Gradually she prepared herself to glide down the rest of his spine, enjoying the feeling of their intimacy together in the air, recognizing the sense of anticipation like a familiar friend; she has done this a million times before, it's her favourite thing to do.

The 15 minutes of waiting time ended faster than expected. She applied the next layer. It was impossible not to look at him during the process. Occasionally he looked back at me with a shy smile running his eyes the second after along his arms and shoulders, observing the changes the gave to his skin.

Even though she acknowledged that there was acid in the liquid, she never admitted the awkwardness and madness of young teenagers wanting to peel the entire first layer of their skin off and how her profession was linked to it.

It went on like this for another one and a half hours. She added further layers onto his flesh until the bucket had no left. I kept asking her politely what it was that was in the liquid and how it worked. But she refused to vocally indulge me. There were silences while I, bewildered, couldn't think of how to engage her, how to make it clear that I wanted to discuss these things with her.

In the meantime, she advised him to take a mild shower. The water should be on the cold side, she added, while guiding him to the bathroom. She recommended not to apply shower gel, nor to scrub his skin. He could gently dab his body with a towel if he wanted. She strictly forbid him to go out into the sun, as if it's the most iniquitous thing to do; instead she suggested that he could wait downstairs in the lobby area for the next 2-3 hours.

I grasped onto the last moments of observation offered by the scene before he rushed out of sight. My calm blankness was not interrupted.

I had coffee downstairs in the neighbouring café run by the same owner as the hair salon. She joined me for a *bun thit nuong* lunch. She looked loose, her clothes and hair identical to how I imagined a hair stylist would dress when going to work, with all the same conscious trends and calculated objectivity.

The café looked out onto a side street parked with two rows of mopeds. There was another café or bar of some kind, full of kids it seemed, when I leaned over the edge of the terrace to have a look. The entire building, which housed the hair salon and café was made from white stucco concrete, half of it was still under construction.

When she put a toothpick in her mouth after her last bite, she got up. I looked at her and found that she was already turning to look at me. She nodded her head in the direction of the stairs and said "I need to go." A little later she came over to me again and mentioned she was going to the dinner later today and that I should join.

He walked back up to the room without saying anything and sat back at the same point he left. His posture stiffened into position. I asked him a few



questions about where he had been, how his lunch was and he gave vague answers, not really interested in being friendly with me in that sense. As he didn't feel the pressure to talk to me, we gazed at each other as we gazed the room.

She arrived just minutes after and started to lean forward to have a glance at him, she moved around leaning her shoulder in while pushing her fingers into his flesh, feeling whether it was dry enough. She held his arm with her left hand while tapping with the other over his triceps.

"Here it separated", she noted, scratching with her purple nails several times along the same spot. She could pick up a piece of his thin skin between her fingers and pulled carefully on it until it loosened further areas. His eyes observed the scenery with heightened curiosity while I kept asking him whether it hurt. He denied any pain with a shake of his head without looking at me.

She moved on along his breasts, separating his first skin layer from the one below, peeling it off like dried layers of onion until you discover the one you actually want to eat, rich and juicy. I saw her nails hunt for his shed skin repetitively.

We collected scraps and pieces of the wrinkled dead membrane in a translucent yellow plastic bag. She kept calling him 'hot boy' and joked about how tender and bright his skin would be after today, like milk, she added. Yet, his satisfaction remained deeply private, darkly so, disconnected from the result of the day's treatment and disconnected from his expected outcome. It was a kind of secret in action, one that people seemingly refused to talk about.

I met him again at the reception. Only then did I realize that he was working here. He greeted me the same way he did the first time, only to guide me to the back room on the ground floor. The owner of the hair salon was already waiting for me, showing me the hair colouring options I could consider. She pointed at her own blue and blonde bleached perm and pulled a hair straightener out underneath the table.

It was dusk by the time I left the salon. I had been inside long enough to forget what time it was. It was around this moment that I began to feel that I had lost the set of motivations with which I had entered the situation and this country—I was shaky, felt sick, paranoid. As I walked off into the night, blood began to flow warmly through my veins again, but the stifling tension in my muscles didn't die. I picked up the phone to call Dan. No answer. So I continued moving with this kind of flaming tension in my thoughts into the heat, allowing it to spread and multiply.









**CHANEL**

THE CHANEL MOMENT

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