

[Sitting on a...]

Cyrus sat on a bench in Prospect Park, overwhelmed by the voicemail from Sang, Orkideh's gallerist and ex-wife. Orkideh's recent death left him feeling utterly desolate; he had only known her for a brief time. Grief felt transformed in this digital age, where death was just another notification amid mundane ads, yet he grappled with a personal sense of loss as he called Sang.

Sang's voice, lighter than in her message, revealed Orkideh's passing and her choice to end her own life. Cyrus, remembering his father's old beliefs about sickness, felt a coldness grip him as he tried to comprehend the news. The call transitioned into a conversation about Orkideh's thoughts of Cyrus and his pursuit of a book regarding her. Sang, having been closely tied to Orkideh for years, expressed a sentiment that Cyrus found jarring. He awkwardly extended his condolences, not knowing that comfort was inadequate.

Sang discussed Orkideh's life and the certainty of her choices, which stirred a mix of emotions in Cyrus. He abruptly asked why Sang was calling him specifically. This led Sang to reveal her anger towards Orkideh, a sentiment that resonated deeply with Cyrus. He was haunted by uncertainty and fear, leading him to ask the shocking question: "Was Orkideh my mother?" The inquiry was both raw and immediate, shattering his understanding.

After a pregnant pause, Sang clarified that Orkideh had intended to tell him about their connection but perhaps ran out of time. This revelation rocked Cyrus to his core—he had been living in ignorance about his origins. Sang shared that Orkideh had recognized him years later, a thought that compounded Cyrus's confusion and sorrow.

Disoriented, he navigated images of Orkideh on his phone, seeking a reflection of himself in her features. Finally, as they communicated about his location, the conversation left Cyrus pondering the intricacies of his newfound familial ties. Within minutes, Sang promised to drive to him, unveiling a new chapter in Cyrus's life.