

an emotional page turner with an unexpected twist

SHE CALLS HER MOM

a novella

KANAWU



PRAISE FOR KANA WU

“You know when you go to a movie and watch a lighthearted rom-com? The closing credits are rolling over, and a young singer songwriter’s theme song is being played in a movie theater. When you walk out of the theater, you are greeted by a warm rainy city and gentle summer breeze. That was how I felt like when I finished this new lighthearted romance. This book has a very positive vibe to it.” — Goodreads Reviewer, 4 stars, on *A Warm Rainy Day In Tokyo*.

“...Highly recommended for readers who are tired of the typical chick lit romance, and are ready for something light as air and just as refreshing.” — K.C. Finn for Readers’ Favorite, 5 stars, on *No Romance Allowed*.

“An agreeably warm story that bounces along effortlessly on the genuine chemistry of its lead characters, Rory and Peter, Wu takes the much-loved tropes of the genre and makes them her own.” — The BookViral Review, on *No Romance Allowed*.

“Readers who enjoy romance novels with a touch of suspense will appreciate this book.” — OnlineBookClub.org, 4 stars, on *No Romance Allowed*.

“Wu offers a relatable tale of a couple struggling to adapt to a long-distance relationship. Peppered with intriguing dynamics of co-workers who threaten fidelity, and judgmental family members sowing doubt, there is palpable tension sustained throughout this compact novel.” — Self-Publishing Review, 4 stars, on *No Secrets Allowed*

“There wasn’t any toxic character trying to take the other down. It was pure love and we all need that nowadays.” — Goodreads Reviewer, 4 stars, on *A Warm Rainy Day In Tokyo*.

“A Warm Rainy Day in Tokyo not only offers a Hallmark style love story, but also an intriguing peek into life in Japan through the eyes of a foreigner. Kana Wu’s characters are lovable and easy to root for, and she builds a masterful and immersive setting for them as well.” — Goodreads Reviewer, 4 stars, on *A Warm Rainy Day In Tokyo*.

“The plot of this book surprised me and kept me interested.” — Goodreads Reviewer, 5 stars, on *A Warm Rainy Day In Tokyo*.

“I enjoyed this book even more than the first one. It had a bit of twist and turn with wonderful characters. It was a fantastic one-sitting read for me. Nothing is better than sitting with a book that pulls you out of the real world.” — Goodreads Reviewer, 5 stars, on *No Secrets Allowed*.

“Verdict: It’s good!” — Goodreads Reviewer, 4 stars, on *No Romance Allowed*.

OTHER NOVELS BY KANA WU

No Romance Allowed

No Secrets Allowed

A Warm Rainy Day In Tokyo

She Calls Her Mom

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For more about this author, please visit <https://www.kanawuauthor.com/>

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Interior and Cover Design by Asya Blue

eBook ISBN: 978-1-7357676-6-6

paperback ISBN: 978-1-7357676-7-3

Main category—FIC044000 FICTION / Women

Other category—FIC045020 FICTION / Family Life / General

First Edition

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SHE CALLS HER MOM

a novella

KANA WU

To all young moms out there who navigate the challenges of motherhood on their own, this story is for you.

CHAPTER 1

With her hands over her ears, Zoey Matthew squeezed her eyes shut and imagined she was standing in a garden, surrounded by fragrant flowers, colorful butterflies, and chirping birds. The wailing from the corner of the bedroom grew louder and louder, seeping through her orange earplugs.

Next to the king-size bed, four-month-old Ella Dawson was shrieking in her crib. Her tiny fingers clenched, her feet kicked in the air, and her face was red. She looked ready to explode.

Zoey loved the baby to pieces, and wherever they went, people praised Ella's angelic face, blue eyes, and curly blonde hair. They had no idea that little bundle of joy had the deafening scream of a banshee.

If God had remembered to make an off switch for babies, being a mom would have been much easier.

Leaning back against the window frame, Zoey massaged her temples. In desperation, she pulled at her brown hair, which was tied in a loose ponytail, until it hung in messy, wild strands around her face. She'd bounced, fed, and bathed Ella, then changed her. She'd checked to make sure the plastic fastener wasn't sticking out and run her fingers across the diaper to make sure it felt smooth before putting it on the baby. Zoey had sung until her throat hurt, but the pitch of Ella's wail kept rising. Right now, leaving her alone on the bed seemed like the best option.

Exhaling, Zoey turned to gaze out the window of the master bedroom. Her sister had bought this townhouse with her fiancé, Richard Dawson, two-and-half years ago before they were married. Zoey admired her sister's choice to pay a high monthly mortgage in exchange for this incredible view.

She peered out into the green canyon and could make out the majestic Saddleback Mountains in the distance. The afternoon sunlight shone through the thick rain clouds as if the rays were attempting to push them away. It had been pouring nonstop for the past two days. After the first ten hours, a flash-flood warning had been sent out, and once the rain subsided, the local news broadcast footage of mudslides that had struck two coastal towns in Orange County.

In the room, the tiny baby had already flooded her polka-dot tunic with tears. Feeling hopeless, heat swelled behind Zoey's eyes as she wished everything would return to the way it had been before, in her old life as a billing accountant.

She almost missed the bitchy payroll manager who never looked her in the eye when they bumped into each other in the hallway and the jealous tattletale coworker who seemed ready to broadcast her pointless mistakes. They seemed mellow compared to this tantrum-throwing baby.

Life was unfair.

Zoey would never forget the moment when police had knocked on the door of her apartment forty-five days earlier. It was seven in the morning, and she'd just finished her breakfast. Her stomach churned, and she almost threw up as the officer told her

about the hit-and-run that had taken Katya and Richard Dawson's lives. They'd been on California SR-14, on their way to Mammoth Lakes for their first trip as a family, when the driver lost control of the stolen F-150. Ella had survived because Katya shielded her with her body.

When the police brought Zoey to the morgue to identify the bodies, the bruises and wounds on her sister's face and neck had been stitched up and cleaned. Her knees trembled when she received the bag of their personal belongings gathered from the debris. Zoey bawled her eyes out for days, although she knew that wouldn't bring them back to life.

Katya had been more than a sister to Zoey. Zoey was seven and Katya was fifteen when their dad died from an overdose and their mom ran away without a word to them two weeks after that. Their maternal grandma, Evie, had taken them in. When she passed away four years later, she left the house to them. The sisters lived there for another year before they decided to sell it and use the money to pay for their education.

Zoey couldn't recall her mom's face because Katya had burned all their family pictures and memorabilia in anger. Never had it crossed her mind that her gentle and thoughtful sister could be so violent. Her face was distorted in rage as she threw a burning stick upon the piles, watched the fire swallow them up, and threw the ashes into a garbage can. Zoey never mentioned her mom in front of her sister because she was afraid it would ignite Katya's rage all over again. Still, she remembered their mom had beautiful blonde hair and blue eyes, like Ella. But other than that, Zoey didn't have any memories of her. Perhaps she'd buried them deep in her mind.

The thing she regretted most was that she hadn't answered the phone the morning Katya left for that deathly trip. Zoey had already been late for work and ignored her sister's call. Now, she'd never know what Katya wanted to say.

Once the news of the couple's death was announced, people—mostly friends of Katya and Richard and some close neighbors—began rotating in and out of the townhouse, giving Zoey their condolences. She didn't know them, but it didn't matter because every day was a blur.

After the cremation and memorial service, Harold Young from Young Law Firm, LLC, invited Zoey to his office and introduced himself as the executor and attorney for the Dawson living trust. The sixty-year-old man read the will, which stated that Ella was her parents' sole beneficiary. All their assets would be given to her when she was twenty-five years old. In the event that Ella was underage when they died, her guardian would manage all the liquid assets until she reached that age. Katya had chosen Zoey as Ella's guardian.

Speechless, Zoey had frozen in her seat. She was barely twenty-one, and her career had just begun. How could she be a mom to an infant? What about the dreams she wanted to pursue? Should she sacrifice them all? What about her love life? Was there any man who could possibly be interested in her—a woman with a baby—even though the baby wasn't hers?

She was haunted by these thoughts and, after leaving the attorney's office, drove four hundred miles north instead of going home. She ignored the congested traffic

when entering downtown Los Angeles and navigated the orange barrels around the highway work zone on autopilot. Gorgeous beach scenes and the tunnels of Pacific Coast Highway always caught her eye when she would drive through there, but not this time. Her mind focused on only one thing: driving as far as possible from home.

Near Monterey, she stopped at Lover's Point and stayed in a budget hotel for several nights. She switched her phone off because she didn't want anyone to reach her.

On her fourth day there, Nora Oh—her best friend since elementary school—found her sitting alone on the sand by the seashore, watching the ebb and flow of the waves. Zoey's ex-boyfriend, Terrance Jensen, also known as Tian Jie—his Chinese given name—or TJ, had brought her, then waited patiently a little off to the side for Nora to go talk to her.

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