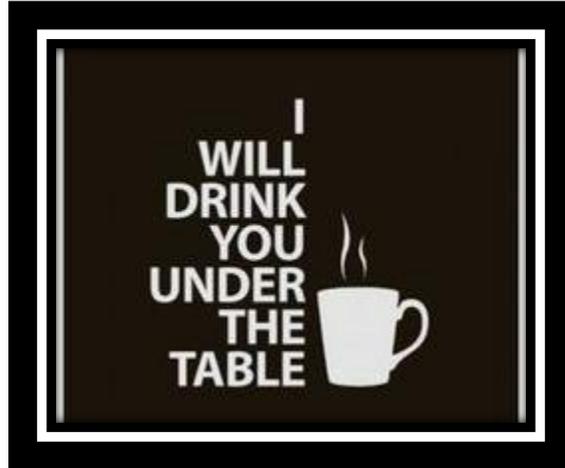


CHAPTER TWELVE

(Part 1)

“I will drink you under the table . . .”



Friday, December 19th, 2014

7:30 P.M.

JeJu Island – ‘Toscana’ Hotel Elevator

“FIVE . . . four . . . three . . . two . . .” Saffire counted slowly, taking one deep breath after another before stepping into the crowded elevator. Time stood still, the events of the past week colliding into one another like random asteroids in outer space. After everything that had already gone down tonight, was she that naïve? To believe what ‘Prince JJ’ had told her a mere two short days ago in Uncle’s dining room? That she was his ‘Cotton Candy Princess’ and if she would fall with him, they would land together? What a sucker she was. Reminiscent of her Father’s continual escapades, he was landing alright . . . straight into the arms of someone else. She had washed her hands of father’s indiscretions over the years, maybe it was time to do the same with JaeJoong.

In the split second that it took to remind herself he had deliberately left her out of the loop to have a secret weekend rendezvous with someone else, Junsu’s soft voice reverberated in her ear calling her ‘honey’. If she had been confused about her love triangle before, now she was even more so.

Leaning into the mirrored side wall, she waited patiently attempting not to give away her somewhat inebriated condition to those around her. The stiletto heels were difficult enough to maneuver without the calamity of alcohol. Her reflection made her look tall, distinguished and put together, when in fact (right at that moment), even with the sweet sounds of Christmas music permeating the elevator, and the excited mumblings of the guests around her, she felt unexpectedly alone.

Seconds after the steel doors began to close against the already full compartment a loud girlish squeal and set of fingers grabbed against the opening.

“GIDALIM, (WAIT)!”

A kindly middle-aged man in glasses smiled, reaching past Saffire’s lanky form and pushed the **OPEN** button, allowing the doors to whoosh back revealing a short teenage Asian girl with large brown eyes, dressed in a crazy bright red Christmas sweater and blue jeans, tugging a little girl, (looking not more than six or seven years old) behind her.

“Oh geez, gamsahamnida!” Bowing in thanks to the man, and grinning at Saffire she squeezed into the tiny left over space, snuggling up against the long white gown.

“Annyeong. Hi!” Her greeting was kind, as she clung to the hand of the small child beside her. “Mianhae, I’m sort of in a hurry. Supposed to meet my friend downstairs at the VIP Club.” Continuing with a lowered, hushed voice her ragged sporadic breathing gave away her excitement.

“I just got Kim JaeJoong’s autograph for my sister. Isn’t that daebak? He was right out there.” Pointing with the signed paper still in her hand, she eluded to the fact he had been directly down the hall, obviously a split second after Saffire spotted him.

Nodding her head agreeably, the ‘sister’ grinned, showing pearly white teeth, her round eyes crinkling as she giggled.

“OMO! (Oh my God), he was the last ‘JYJ’ member for me to snag today. I can’t believe I looked up on the way over here and BAMM there he was!” Rattling on, she continued fingering the paper lovingly as if it was really meant for her. “I got Junsu and Yoochun earlier at the fan signing and photoshoot. God they’re so hot, aren’t they? I can’t believe Junsu actually owns this place. Lucky!”

As the elevator eased down one more floor, not bothering to elicit any answers from Saffire, her anxious jabbering continued. She was a fangirl, like most of the patrons at the ‘Toscana’ that weekend, and obviously didn’t care who knew it.

“Are you going down to the VIP Club?” she finally asked, getting ready to dart out the door as the elevator cruised to a stop. “Wish I could get in.”

Staring at Saffire’s expensive gown and jewelry she wondered if the tall blonde was important enough to take them all with her. “My friend and I are gonna hang at the front and get some more autographs . . . for HER . . . my sister,” she emphasized, patting the top of the little girl’s head beside her deliberately. “She loves the Idols almost more than I do. Don’t you sissy?”

Gazing up into Saffire’s twinkling blue eyes, the miniature fangirl nodded again, and stepping out, tugged at her starched, white skirt. Stopping momentarily, Saffire (who loved the innocence of children), stepped aside to let the other’s go on by to respond to her naïve inquisition.

“You’re so beautiful lady. Are you a snow princess like Elsa?” she asked, timidly fingering the white silky material.

Eking out a chuckle, Saffire’s heart melted into the shining, elated face beneath her. Cocking her head slightly, she leaned over wrapping one arm around the girl’s jacketed shoulder, as she contemplated an answer, her weak smile giving away the condition of her (equally as fragile) heart.

“Annniii . . . hajiman, gamsahabnida. (Nooo . . . but, thanks) I’m just a regular girl like you. I’d sure LIKE to be one, though . . . wouldn’t you? Elsa’s daebak.”

Pulling at Saffire’s dress once more, the tiny voice announced candidly. “De . . . ‘cause only princesses like her can fall in love with a prince, like JJ,” before reaching over and snatching the autographed paper out of her older sister’s hand unexpectedly, shoving it into Saffire’s palm.

“Here! This is for you. Your eyes look sooo sad. Maybe JJ will fall in love with you. He wrote it, ‘TO THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS IN THE LAND. SARANGHAE, PRINCE JJ.’ That’s YOU, not me.”

Then, before the teenager with her could protest the giving up of the prized autograph, the child darted away into the crowd forcing her to follow, displeasure evident on her astonished face.

Saffire stood dumbfounded in the middle of the hallway, her knuckles turning white as she gripped the paper with JaeJoong's handwriting between her fingers. Sucking in a deep breath, she stuffed it into her purse, blinking away unhappy tears. What a mysteriously perceptive observation from a mere child . . . how in the hell was her now 'mistrustful' heart supposed to respond to that?

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7:30 P.M.

'Toscana' Hotel – Yoochun's room

ONCE in his suite, Yoochun headed to the small private bar, regarding the composed Saffron sliding off her high heels in front of him. Unable to keep his thoughts from surfacing, it was hard to believe he had plucked her out of a potentially dangerous situation, (like a lost kitten who needed rescuing). Hyun Joong was right to insist she come back here with him. At any rate, he wasn't about to leave her alone to fend for herself.



Relieved that Joong answered his phone on the first ring, (assuring him he would be here soon), he prayed the ever-present Jae wouldn't be tagging along with him. That would be more drama than he could handle in one night. Now, the plan was to keep her from falling apart until he showed up.



Distracted by her beauty, it was a sort of unsettling how quietly she sat perched on his sofa, and it didn't take long to forget himself or his plan entirely. *Damn what was the plan again . . . oh yeah, wing it!* Helping ease his fears a little bit about dealing with an overly-distressed female, he concluded the saucy redhead didn't 'seem' to come across as a hysterical drama queen like Chung A, making his job that much easier.

Saffron, focused on the massive gilded mirror at the suite entrance, her mind a whirlwind of emotions. Paying no particular attention to her 'rescuer' watching from across the room, clicking a thumbnail against her teeth, she displayed a cool demeanor, far from the quaking that was truly going on inside.

Still relatively in shock, it was difficult to comprehend how (just like on Reality T.V. and talk shows), she'd allowed herself to become one of those controlled women who let the men in their

lives dictate their every move. Finally coming to the sad realization, that over the last four years, Ian had managed to do the same by making her dependent only on him. He'd totally isolated her from everyone, and the fall out . . . she'd lost touch with most (if not all) of her friends from home and college, and if she wasn't catering to his needs, then she was working.

Digging for her phone, she tapped Uncle Ryu's number thoughtlessly, putting it to her ear, a calmness washing over her at the idea of hearing his soothing voice. Startled by the recording saying the number was no longer in service she blinked away the tears threatening to spill down her cheeks and onto her brand new party dress. *What am I doing?*

Shuttering, she texted Saffire instead, telling her she was with Yoochun and would explain later. Uncle Ryu had always been her 'go-to' person when she was upset, now unexpectedly it dawned on her that other than her new sister, she had no one else to call.

Yoochun, checked his watch for the third time, attempting to keep busy, clinking ice cubes into glasses, and carefully filling them to the brim with liquid. Saffron was obviously unaware he was watching her, precious time ticking away before Hyun Joong appeared to whisk her away yet again.

Why was it he always managed to get himself tangled up between his various hyungs and their love lives? Between Junsu, JJ and Saffire, and now her sister Saffron, Hyun Joong and Chung A, his emotions were a hotbed of relational tension. Damn, he was sorry he had missed the chance to meet the sister's before everyone else had gotten to them.

His curiosity at a peak, he wondered who she was trying to call. Saffire? She was probably still at dinner, ready to bolt into Junsu's arms to give up the night to romance. Hyun Joong maybe? She didn't know he had already made that gesture for her. Would she be upset with him if she found out? Didn't matter . . . if he couldn't have her for himself . . . well then, Joong was the next best thing. And obviously, he was the one she had her heart set on.

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EXHALING a long drawn-out sigh, Saffron wished to God Hyun Joong was here with her. A finger hovering over his contact number, she was dying to call him . . . But, even if she did, what would she say? Not even knowing for sure if he was in the hotel, (even if he was), did she want him to think she was that needy? Ian was 'her' problem, not unlike Chung A was his.

The longer she pondered the events of the short dinner from hell, the madder she got until finally kicking one shoe across the tile floor in fury, the tornado Uncle Ryu knew her to be, began to materialize. Cocking her head sidewise, disregarding Yoochun's startled response at seeing her shoe skid over beside him, she couldn't help but question what the 'F' her mother was thinking, inviting Ian to dinner tonight? Not to mention the entire weekend!

Stuffing both feet in under her skirt she rolled her eyes like a sassy teenager, flinging her long braid over one shoulder, cussing under her breath, "Damn bitch, can't imagine what the hell she thought I would do? She's insane to think I'd go back to America with that asshole. Never! It's not like he's gonna put a ring on my finger and propose all of a sudden."

No doubt the real reason was either mother or her power-hungry husband, figured with her prior influence over Ian, he could help them out in some way . . . socially or in business. Certainly, overlooking her newfound career at the café neither one of them had her happiness in mind. But, did they ever?

It was easy admitting mother had used her most of her life, remembering being dressed up and paraded around Chicago's social circle, (like a china doll) to show everyone how maternal she was. "No wonder I'm afraid to have children," she muttered disgustedly.

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“SAFFRON . . . here, drink this it'll make you feel better," Yoochun interrupted, smiling as he encouraged her to take the glass of liquor, unable to help noticing the chalky paleness under her makeup as she accepted the drink. Hmm, why was she muttering something about children?

"Thank you." Somewhat indifferent to his kindness, she wrapped both hands around the crystal glass, closing her eyes and sipping the amber liquid.

Yoochun, sat back down in a chair next to the couch lacing his fingers together, one ear cocked for Hyun Joong at the door, still unable to take his eyes off this woman that looked as if any moment she could break apart into little pieces.

Liquor coursing through her blood stream brought Saffron's body out of shock, allowing her to relax, gleaning a clearer understanding to the extent of the pent up rage, she'd been carrying around for years. If Mother hadn't forced her hand tonight, she might never have known. Not to

mention, what Ian had told her was true. He ‘had’ molded her into who she was today . . . no, correct that . . . who she had been ‘before’ leaving Chicago. What he failed to comprehend was she was different now, and wanted to change from the uptight, pleasing woman that lived for only for him, (a charismatic, yet still overpowering man).

“Skinny bitch can have him,” she grumbled sipping the drink, thanking God for Mr. Big’s fiancé, who demanded he call things off between them. “In fact, I should send her a case of Godiva chocolates. Hell, I should buy her a whole fucking store for making me finally stand on my own two feet.”

Glancing at YooChun she considered the handsome, openly friendly face, wondering if he would like to help her celebrate her rebirth. Noting him waiting patiently for her to fall apart, he rounded out the trio that made up ‘JYJ’. He was the boy next door . . . not possessing the pretty looks of JJ, or the sexiness of Junsu but, giving off a special vibe, indicative of the ability to keep all a girls secrets. “I wonder if he’s ever worked the café?” she whispered to herself.

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THE phone buzzed in the arrival of a text message, causing her to jerk at the sudden eruption of noise in the otherwise quiet room. Sadly, she’d half expected it. Ignoring it, she turned it back over in her lap, unable to deal with her mother just yet.

Clearly, ‘Sandra’ was reacting to the boorish Ian returning to the table without her, concluding her disappearance was inappropriate and childish. No doubt, in Mother’s critical eyes, now she was no better than Saffire.

As the vibrating continued, Saffron gripped the cursed cell wanting to turn it off, but knowing she would have to face the intolerable woman at some point.

“Shit, guess there’s no way to avoid her,” she groaned.

“Everything alright?” Yoochun responded, sensing her anxiety as she read the message. Feeling compelled to make sure she wasn’t going to break down over a text, it was easier remembering how engaging she had been earlier in the evening, (before the confrontation in the hall with the American, Ian).

“Huh . . .” Turning at his worried expression, she flashed him her best rendition of a dazzling smile to set him at ease, reassuring him softly, “Don’t worry Yoochun, I promise not to be a weepy female . . . not my style.”

Continuing to point the phone toward him, she added off-handedly, “Pffft, lookee here . . . MOTHER, SANDRA thinks I’m with HIM, Mr. Big. Know what? If that keeps her off my back, even temporarily . . . then cool. So be it.”

Still smiling, she answered the text, tongue between her teeth, realizing once Mother and Ian ‘both’ were out of the way, she could concentrate on herself and the rest of the evening. Starting with Yoochun.

Tossing the phone over toward her purse she knew conversation, at this point, was sorely needed. So far, at least fifteen minutes had passed between them without a word except pleasantries over a drink. Not knowing this man in the least, the only thing she could do was fall back on her people skills.

“Thank you for the rescue. I take it this is your suite,” she said sweetly.

“De, JJ and I share it when we’re here for events.” he answered bobbing his head in agreement. “You’re welcome to stay, I can always get us another. Jae won’t care. We got connections, you know.” Referring to Junsu, he raised his glass accommodatingly hoping she wouldn’t say ‘yes’. JJ might really NOT like the idea of moving somewhere else and giving up the suite he was used to occupying on a regular basis.

“That’s nice of you, but I can’t put you out like that, you’ve already helped me too much.” She waffled, lowering her head suddenly awkward with the knowledge Yoochun had witnessed her humiliation at Ian hands.

Picking a piece of non-existent lint off the brocade dress she knew that not only that, Saffire would have a ‘cow’ finding out she was the reason JJ had been ousted from his nice upscale suite. (If in fact they did manage to hook up over the upcoming weekend, Junsu or not.)

“Um Yoochun, I really am sorry about that scene with Mr. Big, I still can’t believe he followed me to the restroom. I can’t thank you enough for ‘intervening’ to help.”

Before his kind eyes could register into words, she babbled on, anxious to make him understand the odd connection she was feeling toward him.

“I know this might seem strange to say, because we just met you know . . . but, for some reason . . . you make me feel really safe,” she confessed, gulping down the last of her drink, wondering if it would be unseemly to ask for another.

“Hyun Joong would have done the same for my girlfriend,” he admitted, rising to take the glass to refill.

Handing it over willingly, she followed his lean figure, now interested in his response after hearing ‘girlfriend’ and ‘Hyun Joong’ in the same sentence. It was the label she had longed for from Ian and never received, Joong had bestowed it on her without warning or thought . . . did the word ‘girlfriend’ have the same meaning for both of them? Rubbing her stomach she questioned if the fluttering was due to the fact that Hyun Joong apparently thought of them as a couple, having said as much, or that she hadn’t eaten since noon. She bet Yoochun knew where her ‘Seung Jo’ was going to be this weekend.

“Mr. Big huh?” he asked, “Strange last name. I’m guessing he’s the ex by your reaction in the dining room when he showed up.”

Refreshing her drink, ultimately he began to relax knowing he wouldn’t have to deal with tears and tantrums. Turning back around he chuckled at her bewildered expression before elaborating, “Joong and I had a long talk the other night over drinks.”

“Yeah he’s the ex. The name . . . what can I say, I’m a fan of ‘Sex in the City’, Joong talked to you about me?” she uttered, now curious at what he might have said about the pushy American girl (without panties) showing up at his apartment to seduce him.

Observing the flush creeping up her neck he attempted to put her fears at rest, shaking his head ‘no’ his palms waving in her face, “Ani, don’t get the wrong idea, being 86’ liners we’re close. All he did was sing your praises.” Blushing he rolled his eyes smiling, “And, from what I’ve seen tonight . . . with good reason. Both you and your sister are charming,” Pacifying her, he didn’t feel the need to inform her of the negative comments hailed by all, about women in general the longer they drank.

Not quite believing he was telling her everything, but letting it go anyway . . . Saffron stretched the kinks out of her legs, adjusting her skirt. “Well, that’s good to know . . . so any advice about what’s going on with HIS ex?” she asked, accepting the glass at the side of the couch, from his outstretched hand.

“Aigoo, not really my place to answer questions about the woman but, mmm . . . just don’t trust her. Sorry that’s not much help huh?” His poker face creasing into a smile at hearing the firm knocking on the door behind him, he rose. “Maybe you should ask him . . .” Heading for the door, he was ready to give up his recue duties and head out to meet Jonghyun, and Onew at the VIP bar.

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SAFFRON placed the now empty glass on the table. Who was he whispering to? Had he called her sister? Or worse, her meddling mother? Not wanting to talk to either one at the moment, she stood up rushing to the sliding glass door, gazing out at the ocean. Well, she could forget escaping that way . . . too high up!

The only exit was through the front entrance. Cussing under her breath she decided it would be smarter to march right past whoever was there for him to ‘hand’ her over to.



Turning on one heel she froze, fingers to her throat in astonishment, for standing in front of her (dressed to kill) in an open white shirt carrying a suit jacket as if he had just come from a formal dinner, was her own handsome ‘Baek Seung Jo’.

“Oh Ha Ni what kind of trouble you in now?” Hyun Joong asked, the corner of his mouth quirking up at her shocked face.

The sight of her made his heart skip a beat, decked out in a cream-colored brocade dress that was both understated and sexy all at the same time. With her golden red hair braided over one breast, his groin tightened, recalling how silky it had felt on his naked body.

“Joong, what are you doing here?” she burst out, studying the man that had her running a gamut of emotions, from anger, confusion, to mainly lust, (with a capital ‘L’).

For claiming to be such a savvy business woman, Hyun Joong could read every emotion playing across her face, (even though Yoochun had already filled him in on what had happened). “I’m here for the festival. Working . . . you?” he asked, chuckling.

“Festival? Ummm . . . is that right? I was having dinner with my parents and sister,” she responded, unsure what to tell him about tonight. Did she dare mention Mr. Big was here . . . and wanted her back?



“Come here Saffron . . .” Starting toward her he held out both arms, wanting to ease her obvious anxiety.

Skidding around the couch she launched into the safety of his embrace, nuzzling into the open shirt, inhaling the scent that made him her drug of choice. That was all the reassurance she needed, the comfort of his arms, something she wished Saffire could have given her the other night after leaving his apartment, distraught and alone.

As her body reacted immediately, tingling along her nerves, a tightening of her pelvic muscles, she finally experienced . . . an overwhelming sense of security. The last few days had been difficult. The cold shoulder from Saffire, uncertainty about him after the ‘baby mama’ incident, her parents and tonight with Mr. Big. But, everything would be set right, now that he was here.

“I’m so happy you came! Why didn’t you tell me you’d be at JeJu? she quizzed him, squeezing tighter to make sure he was real.

“I sent a note. Didn’t you get it?”

“Oh! You mean the saffron, tea, and cookbook? Yes, I did. Thank you. What an awesome surprise. I’ve never had a guy send such a ‘personal’ gift,” she blushed shyly, sounding like a giddy teenager on a date with her first boyfriend.

“I thought about asking you to come, but you’re such a distraction you know we’d never have left the room,” he said kneading her neck, as the tension eased away from the muscles, “Did you miss me?”

“Of course not. I’m mad at you remember?” Teasing him she half-heartily slapped his hard chest, recognizing the fact she hadn’t picked up any of his calls . . . then quieted instantly at seeing the frustration in his brown eyes.

“Mmmm, guess we need to clear some things up . . . starting with answering your phone. I don’t like being ignored Saffron, so if I call . . . please answer,” he warned, rubbing her upper arms.

All teasing aside she could see he was serious, so with a deep breath and the two drinks giving her courage dragging out of his embrace, she resolved to apologize.

“I’m sorry about the scene in your apartment the other night . . . I admit to acting rather childish about Chung A . . . however, in my defense . . . it was a bit of a blow to be caught with my pants down, so to speak. Then there was the announcement about her CONDITION,” she alleged, picking up her empty glass (the ice clinking) on the way back to the bar, covering her stomach as it gurgled.

“Not all your fault . . . I shouldn’t have been thinking with my dick and told you straight up about my situation before we rolled around naked on the floor. Although, that WAS my favorite part of the evening.” Remembering how erotic she looked on his living room rug among the scattered bits of popcorn his eyebrows twitched uncontrollably.

Saffron circled the bar in awe of the man before her, Ian wouldn’t have admitted to any wrong doing letting her carry the blame. Dropping the ice into the crystal glasses she stole a peek at the man who was so different from Mr. Big.

Joong was talking to her and not down at her. Feeling that her move to Korea was the right decision she slid his drink across the marble counter. Clearly, this was how a man was supposed to act. Replacing the bottle of liquor, she whined at spying a row of small jars, one of them turning out to be green olives.

“Oh damn, I’m so hungry, I didn’t even get a roll before all the drama started,” she mumbled, clutching them as if she’d found caviar. Opening it she dipped manicured fingers inside, scooping out two and popping them into her mouth. “Mmmm . . . yummy.”

Hyun Joong watched as euphoria spread over her face while she sucked the juice out of the condiment before chewing.

“Babe, how about I order some food and we go to my room. We can talk about anything you want, Chung A, this Mr. Big . . . us . . .” he trailed off.

Eyes getting wide she swallowed, while digging out another olive, “What if I don’t want to talk about anyone . . . this is like a dream come true. No one knows where we are but Yoochun, and I have you all to myself, maybe I don’t want to get all deep into conversation about our ex’s . . . waste of breath.”

Sensing her sudden change in mood he stood still as she crept toward him. Damn, he could swear she was reading his mind, because the last thing he wanted to do was talk. Straightening his shoulders he undressed her with his eyes, hoping she didn't notice the hard-on that was inescapable.

Slinking around the bar she sucked the vinegary liquid off her fingers, leaning in to kiss his awaiting lips. "And after food, can you guess what's next on my agenda?" she asked, cocking an eyebrow up, tugging at the bowtie and tracing his collarbone with her tongue through the open shirt.

"Well, we never did get to act out the bathroom scene 'Ha Ni' . . . did you wear panties tonight?" Tugging on her braid he brought her back within kissing distant, "Mmmm, I love olives too," he whispered as his tongue drove between her oily lips inviting her to join him in the sensual dance.

Dropping them on the couch he guessed they were headed for another marathon make-out session doubting he would get her food or see the inside of his room anytime soon.

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IT wasn't long after they had landed that her lipstick ended up smeared over his bare chest, the bowtie barely clinging to the arm of the couch.

Arching her back as he shoved the bodice down to her waist, anticipating his mouth devouring her with a primal hunger, they ignored the ringing of the phone.

God he had no control over his urges when it came to the red-headed vixen under him, nuzzling the creamy cleavage of her breasts wanting nothing more than to lose himself in her body. Groaning at the thought of lifting the old-fashioned skirt (made full by the crinoline slip) had him turned on to the point of forgetting they were not in his suite as his hand slipped beneath the hem of her dress.

"'Seung Jo' the phone . . ." she crooned as his fingers teased the inside of her thighs, lips grazing her belly.

"Mmm, huh. . . later," he croaked winking at her, "I'm headed to 'Never-Never-Land'."

Flipping the skirt up over her head he was convinced, nothing was going to stop him from the sweet treasure he had lost in his apartment by the interruption of the ex.

Fishing the hem from around her face breathless when her panties tugged off her hips . . . the phone shrieked once again, disturbing the heavy breathing emanating from the couple on the sofa. Saffron swore, as the sound was comparable to that of a female voice screaming, “STOP GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF HER CROTCH.”

Suddenly uncomfortable she wiggled under him, “Joong if you don’t answer that I’m going too.”

“Well fuck . . .” he uttered, sitting up groaning at yet another lost opportunity. Searching for his jacket as it rang, he scooped up the coat retrieving the cell cussing again at seeing the Caller ID displaying ‘CHUNG A’. Gazing at a half-naked Saffron giving him a curious look he apologized, “Mianhae. Babe, I won’t be long.” Irritation evident in his deep voice as he rose from between her legs, heading away from her he barked, “What?”

Her eyes followed him, licking her lips when the fingers that had been torturing her lightly fluttered up and down his bare abs as he talked. Shivering she sat up straightening out her clothes pissed at the timing of ‘baby-mama’ knowing that the moment had passed.

“Really, so much for ‘Never-Never-Land’,” she yelled at his back reaching for her glass as his stiff figure shut her out from the conversation. Seeing it was empty, she lumbered to the bar for a refill. This was the second time Chung A had interrupted them, she was beginning to think the bitch had ESP. Pouring the amber liquor over the ice, she wondered how long this would go on before Hyun Joong comprehended that she was doing it to keep him close.

With the phone to his ear listening to Chung A, he made his way over to the bar mouthing, “Mianhae . . .” to her again.

“What’s she want now?” Saffron asked, not bothering to be quiet,

Shrugging his shoulders, seeing the storm brewing in her blue eyes, he answered Chang A’s question.

“Yes, she’s with me . . . it’s not really any of your business. Why did you call me anyway?” he snarled.

Downing the drink in her hand, Saffron listened to his side of the conversation, getting more upset as it went on. Filling the glass again, she heard him ask, “Why would you call me just to talk?” His brows drawing together as he groaned, “I’m going to hang up, I’ll see you next week like we planned.” Finally, hearing him cussing under his breath.

“Joong . . . if it’s not an emergency hang up,” she urged him.

“Now she’s crying,” he said, giving her a helpless look as he crooned softly into the cell.

Saffron slammed the glass down on the bar as he continued his voice lowered significantly. “Mianhae, I didn’t mean to yell, where are you?” Outraged, she wondered how much she was supposed to put up with, before it was too much. The bitch was going over the top.

“Joong . . . hang up dammit, she’s playing you,” Saffron said, zipping up the back of her dress not liking the direction the conversation was going.

“Okay, where do you want to meet?” he mumbled, silently pleading with Saffron to understand.

That was it, she had had enough . . . giving him a hard look she headed for the sofa and her shoes, sitting down and slipping on her heels. *How could he be so freaking stupid?*

She was livid at being dismissed for the ‘second’ time, first in his apartment, and now once again she was the intruder. Stiffening her spine she overheard him mumbling, “No, she won’t come with me,”

Cringing at his answer, Saffron stuffed things randomly into her purse and marched toward the door. *Mother fucking, son-of-a-bitch . . . I don’t have to put up with this. First Ian and now I’m expected to play second fiddle to some skank. Not going to happen, this was supposed to be a fun night . . . MY FUCKING NIGHT!*

“Saffron, WAIT! Where are you going?” Hyun Joong questioned, dashing quickly to catch up to her.

Spinning on her heel to face him, the fire in her eyes as red as the braid that whipped around her neck, she snarled, “Obviously you have something more important to attend to. Fuck you, AND ‘Seung Jo’,” slamming the door behind her.

He stood there not believing how fast she had gone from a purring kitten, all-soft, sexy and sweet tasting, to a self-righteous shrew demanding all his attention. Damn, he would have to go after her.

‘Why?’ he asked himself, hearing the other female in his life still yelling from the phone. “I said I would be there.” Hanging up on the crazy bitch . . . he knew there was nothing he could do about Saffron at the moment.

Buttoning his shirt he felt like ‘Oh Ha Ni’ was looking for trouble, and he knew without a doubt she was going to do something stupid. Scolding himself for once again thinking with his dick, they should have been talking instead of acting like horny teenagers, yet again.

“Damn,” he groaned, rubbing the bugle that made his usually loose pants uncomfortable. Why was it, whenever he was within kissing distance of the saucy redhead, she always managed to distract him, making him losing control of his libido.

Finding his coat he slipped on his shoes, leaving the room as the ‘why still bounced around his brain. *Why was he working so hard to have a relationship with Saffron?* He was freaking Kim Hyun Joong, for God’s sake. He didn’t have to chase women, they came after him in droves, just like she had, only trouble was . . . she was different from the rest.

Wondering why he hadn’t seen it before he hit the elevator button, remembering what Yoochun had to say about this ‘Mr. Big’. It was clear, she needed him . . . not for fame, money, or even sex, no she was looking for the same thing he had always wanted from a relationship . . . acceptance for who she was. The knowledge that she was being seen for who she really was and not a product of what the other man had created.

The damn woman had come looking for ‘Baek Seung Jo’, thinking he would see the real Saffron and love her for herself, just as Uncle Ryu had done for years. Instead she found him, Kim Hyun Joong . . . a screwed up, mess of a man.

* * * * *

Author's Notes: (Going forward, look for updates every 2nd and 4th Wed. of the mo.)

Hello to all our readers!!! We are so excited to be bringing you midway through our story about sisters, Saffire and Saffron Ryu. We LOVE these characters and hope you do as well. They are

so much fun to write about. Now in the middle of, not only complicated love triangles, but family drama as well, poor Uncle Ryu has his ghostly hands full!

Stay with us as we barrel on into the touching back story of Helen Kroes and YoungJae Ryu, and the residual effect their love affair had on the entire family. In the meantime, with emotions at an all-time high, and physical attractions coming to a head . . . the sisters embark on the final chapters in their journey to find true love.

Thank you for reading. We welcome your Likes and Comments. *The Chairman's Daughters*