

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“All you need is Love. Oh, and Coffee.”



Saturday, December 20th, 2014

Toscana Hotel, JeJu Island – Kim Hyun Joong’s Hotel Room

CATCHING the door of the elevator, Hyun Joong slid in pushing the third floor button standing beside Saffron in silence. Had she known of the scores of cell phones pointed her way, surely she’d recognize that by tomorrow morning, videos of Chung A ‘bitch-slapping’ her would be trending all across the world.

He hoped beyond hope that his company would be able to kill most of the press, although he personally wouldn’t be able to do anything about what was already posted on the Internet. Glancing at the ruined dirty white tennis shoes she’d shown off so proudly this morning, declaring she was ready to walk the whole island, now there would be no love locks at Yongduam Bridge. Identifying her would be easy. How many red-haired, foreigners (speaking perfect Korean) were in attendance here on Jeju Island?

He should have listened to his gut. JaeJoong, Yoochun and even Uncle Ryu, all said Chung A was bad news. Stupid, the more they protested the more he hung onto her, trying to prove them wrong. What he wanted to do was wrap Saffron in his arms, making her believe it would be all right, when in fact, it wouldn’t. Now, he had an ex he couldn’t get rid of and a wonderful woman he couldn’t hold on to. *Damn Chung A.*

‘We wish you a Merry Christmas’ filled the elevator with hope for a happy holiday. Saffron was sure this Christmas surpassed all others as the worst in her life. From Ian making an appearance last night at dinner, to finding herself in a catfight with an alleged pregnant woman (of all things). Sweat running between her breasts and grit in her teeth, she dared not look at him, confirming her worst fear. She was fast approaching hysterical, biting the inside of her cheek, tasting the acrid blood. *After this, will be blame me for what happened with baby mama?*

Waiting for the reprimand that never came, she stared ahead into the mirror, eyes pooling with tears, lips trembling, observing her scruffy appearance. Losing control this late in the game, embarrassing herself and Hyun Joong was no longer an option. *Why is the fucking elevator taking so long?*

Shoving through a couple arguing over a brochure as the doors opened, Saffron unmindful of her loose shoelace threatening to trip her, bolted out into the hallway, Hyun Joong nodding, apologetically racing after her. Seizing her by the waist, he pulled the key card from her quivering hand, unlocking the hotel room, urging her to enter away from prying eyes.

Once inside, he pinned her against the closed door concerned, searching for injuries. “Mianhae Saffron . . . are you hurt? Oh, damn her, look at your face.” Catching her chin, his nostrils flared at her swollen cheek. “This is all my fault. Mianhae, forgive me.”

“Joong its okay, it’s not your fault. I’m fine.” Responding to his caring voice, when the gravity of the situation hit her, both knees buckled, the flat of her hands skidding on the cool surface of the wood as she slid to the plush carpet at his feet.

“Like hell you're fine,” Sinking beside her, embracing her quaking form, he smoothed over her disheveled hair, kissing her sweating forehead as the tears gave into sobbing. Fighting his own building emotions, he listened as she babbled, trying to explain how she had gotten caught in a situation, that threatened to hurt him.

Gasping unexpectedly, her eyes bore into his, “Oh fuck . . . (hic) what have I done? Sorry, Joong . . . tried to leave (hic) . . . sorry, she kept pushing . . . people watching . . . I tried . . . oh hell, Yoochun . . . you . . . (hic) phones . . . trouble.” Gripping his shirt, it was viewing the distress written across his face that was her undoing, realizing she had inexplicably stooped to Chung A’s level.

“Shhhh . . . Babe it’s okay, don’t do this to yourself. I know it wasn’t your fault, please stop crying. Important thing is that you’re not hurt . . . it would kill me if you were injured. Dammit.” Striking the door jamb with his forearm Hyun Joong was pissed at putting her right in Chung A’s path. Aware his own selfishness about his image could have cost Saffron serious injury, he knew what his ex was capable of. It wasn’t the first time he’d witnessed her jealousy.

Could Uncle Ryu be right? He had failed to protect her once again, last night the asshole Ian would have dragged her back to America if Yoochun hadn’t intervened. Now today, he was helpless to rescue her from the witch’s clutches.

Holding Saffron tight he consoled the woman who had become of paramount importance to his well-being. It was wrong not to have invited her this weekend. Unconcerned when she used his tee shirt to deal with the tears and sniffing he adjusted her to a more comfortable position between his legs. *Isn’t the ugly stuff (like this) what creates a bond? The very thing Chung A and I are missing.*

His interest went deeper than her beauty, how deep he wasn’t sure. All their encounters were brief with other people around or sexual. Her body was no stranger to him . . . the enigma was her mind. Last night had been his first glimpse into her life with the controlling Mr. Big. Understanding she was good at playing the cold detached business woman, over the last twenty-four hours he was beginning to discover the vulnerable woman, longing to be herself, not what other people expected her to be.

The quiet stretched as her sobs subsided. Maybe she was ready to talk. Resting his chin on the top of her head, inhaling the sweet aroma of her shampoo, his groin flared to life remembering her in front of the bathroom mirror doing her hair, before Saffire showed up stealing away their precious time together.

“Feeling better? Should I call room service for a package of frozen peas?” Scanning the room for the ice bucket he had filled earlier, it was obvious by the pile of towels and unmade bed, maid service hadn’t reached his floor.

“Mmmm.” Unable to keep from smiling at his attempt to lighten the situation, she played along. “Do you really think Junsu would have anything like ‘frozen peas’ in his hotel? Maybe a cool washcloth would work equally as well.”

Rushing to fill her request, Hyun Joong opened the balcony door a crack hearing the chanting of ‘BTOB’ fans supporting the group along with the odor of street food in the air.

Amidst the aftermath of her breakdown and a cool cloth to her cheek, he vowed to Uncle he would work hard to be the man she deserved. Even if that meant indulging her fantasy of ‘Baek Seung Jo’. In the last twenty-four hours his debutante had survived detached parents, a domineering ex-boyfriend, and a self-involved sister like a real champ. He was the culprit that had driven her to drink, turn to another man, and involve herself in a cat-fight with a crazy woman. Maybe talking could wait. He needed to redeem himself and make the last memory of this weekend a good one.

“Does it hurt here?” Being gentle he cupped her face, kissing across each puffy eyelid.

Hiccupping, Safron nodded, “No”. God every part of her body hurt, but he was being so caring, there was no way she would tell him. His kisses were like a healing balm, his loving arms melting away the horrors the evil woman had inflicted on her. Why would Chung A be so thoughtless to hurt her Hyun Joong by creating a scene? Sniffing, her nose crinkled, she blew into the washcloth, using it as a tissue. Embarrassed by weakness, she dropped it to the floor immediately, meeting his sparkling eyes, and lazy grin.

How could Chung A claim to love him, but be willing to drag his name and reputation thru the mud? It didn’t make sense. And since when had he become hers anyway? Studying his ruined shirt, her heart pounded against her chest wiggling to break out of his embrace, (unrivaled he only snuggled her closer). Without thought, Ian came to her mind. He’d never shown such tenderness without a selfish motive.

“How about here?” Touching his lips first to the right, reddened cheek then the left, Joong continued with devoutness.

Giving him a Cheshire cat grin, she shook her head, “No” again, tapping her lips. It was hard to bring back the memory of kissing ‘Baek Seung Jo’ on the screen of her T.V. in Chicago, swearing she would move to Korea and find him. Maybe he was better than her fantasy, a man that could be everything she desired.

“Mmmm . . . hurts there, huh?” Furrowing his brows he stretched her out under him. Sensing a mixture of flowers from the soft beige carpet and her spicy perfume, he nipped at her

mouth, whispering, “Give me the pain,” encouraging her to open, as he swallowed her whimper, tasting mint and the saltiness of her tears.

Responding, the last hour drifted away as her hunger for him grew, roaming the soggy tee shirt covered broad shoulders her slender fingers tangled into his hair. Chung A thought she had won. But, who was Joong kissing right now? Saffron shuddered, because when it was all said and done Chung A had nothing to show but a sore palm. She however, had won the prize . . . Kim Hyun Joong.

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“ONCE again we find ourselves on the floor.” Joong searched her blue eyes aware that her thoughts were heading in the same direction as his. Both gazed at the bed dominating the room. Smirking, he scooped her up stepping around the pile of clothes she’d discarded looking for something to fit Saffire’s tall frame, sitting on the wrinkled spread of the unmade bed, cradling her in his lap.



“My little debutante was brave, to take on the evil witch.” Announcing his acceptance of her situation, he slid off her jacket tossing it carelessly over a chair, slipping the buttons loose on her dirt-stained romper. Catching his hands, he shot her a worried stare. “Saffron maybe you should rest, you look a little peaked.”

“Nooo . . . what about our plans today? I wanted to see the Island.” Scrambling off his lap the jumpsuit gathered at her feet, she seemed energetic enough.

With a ‘Baek Seung Jo’ smirk (he had perfected over the course of the drama) he lifted her out of the one piece and placed her on the bed, sliding off her wrecked shoes. “Ah, there’ll be a next time. Right now, ‘Doctor Baek’ needs to exam his courageous ‘Ha Ni’ for injuries. Pretty certain his diagnosis will be that you spend the day, naked in bed.” Winking, glad to see the color coming back into her pretty face, he had already made his manager aware of the change in plans, and they both agreed, the first priority was to lay low, and keep her out of the public eye.

“Oh, I don’t remember this scene in the drama, seems rather corny.” Giggling, without protesting she scooted over making room for him, throwing the extra pillows onto Saffire’s crumpled evening dress rolled up on the bench at the foot of the king-sized bed.

“I know, I’m trying to fulfill your ‘Baek Seung Jo’ fantasy, but I’m not a writer. Remember? Actor . . . need a script.” Relieved he found little bruising to her supple white skin, blanketing her, he nuzzled into her breasts at the exact time a loud buzzing ripped through the air, drowning out her giggling.

“Oh hell no, not now. Sorry Joong, I have to answer that. It’s probably Saffire,” Seeing the jacket on the chair she was prepared to climb over him. Observing, Hyun Joong sighed rolling feet first off the messy bed.

“Ani, you stay, I’ll get it. Damn.”

Traipsing across the carpeted floor, upset at the interruption, a knock rang out loud and clear from the door. *Who the hell could that be, his handler was already aware of the alternate plans.* Originally his plan was to do his set this morning than fly back to Korea for his date with Saffron, but since she showed up they had decided to tour the island instead. *Could it be Junsu or Jaejoong. Had they heard about the incident this morning?* Fishing her cell from the pocket of the coat she had worn, he frowned at the torn lapel and missing buttons. That was his favorite jacket. No doubt ‘witch Chung A’ had ruined it on purpose.

“Well, well, if it isn’t from Saffire. Said she’s leaving on the next flight home, not to follow her . . . she wants to be alone.” Pausing, he chuckled. “Oh, she also said give Hyun Joong anything his little heart desires.” Eyebrows waggling, he broke out into a wide grin at her confused expression. “Seriously Saffron how did you do so well in business, I can read you like a road map.”

Holding out her hand for the cell she schooled her features back into a neutral expression, “Give it to me. Saffire wouldn’t say that, you’re freaking dreaming. Wanna make bets on who’s at the door, JJ or Junsu?”

“Here.” Pitching the cell at her feet. He cursed as the knock becoming a loud pounding accompanied by a deep voice shouting, “Joong, you in there?”

Huffing, she caught the cell before it bounced off the bed; scanning the message, attempting to read between the lines . . . to no avail. Giving up, annoyed at how her sister’s mind worked, she texted back with her own flight time stating she would talk to her tomorrow.

“Well, Babe it wasn’t JJ or Junsu.” Hyun Joong slipped the ‘Do Not Disturb’ sign on the knob hoping now they would have some peace and quiet. Shutting the door, he threw across the bolt, tugging his tee shirt over his head, feeling the breeze from the balcony cool against his heated body. Always neat, he folded the shirt in half laying it next to the jacket.

“Really, then who?”

“Yoochun . . . he said, ‘Hi’, glad you’re okay”, I think he’s become your champion, not sure how I feel about that.” Admittedly catching her eye, he knew there was about to be drama. “He saw JJ and Junsu trying to talk to Saffire when she was leaving the hotel. So, she DID leave then huh? I’m not surprised. If she can’t take the heat she needs to get out of the fire.” Dropping both hands to his sides, even though his warning would go unnoticed, he had to give it anyway, “Can I just say baby? In the words of ‘Seung Jo’. . . don’t get in between the three of them, it’ll get us nothing but trouble.”

“Don’t you think I know that? But, it doesn’t matter, after all she IS my sister, I don’t favor either one . . . I just wish she would freaking pick. It would make my life so much easier. I don’t know why she does this? And, I don’t know when I became the mother hen in our relationship?”

“It’s ‘cause you’re the protecting, reliable and responsible one.” Answering the question truthfully, he took her phone, hitting the power button, to cut them off from the Internet and the rest of the world.

“Thanks, good way to kill the mood, forget about my sister’s drama. You realize I’m sitting here almost naked in your bed. You want to debate my character or play ‘Doctor Baek and the Debutante’?”

“Woman, you are strange . . . But, I like that . . .” Laughing he crawled up between her legs, “Hang on to your panties ‘Oh Ha Ni’, because I’m about to take you on a naughty adventure.”

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SMILING at the scratch marks dotting the perfect line of Hyun Joong’s muscular naked backside, the scent of sex and him wavered slightly from the wrinkled sheets as Saffron snuggled into the pillow watching him order room service. It was a good thing his Set at the festival ended hours ago, or it would have been embarrassing in the changing room.

Yawning she covered her mouth with the sheet her eyes never leaving him as he strolled to the bed with a bottle of water. Glancing over at the clock, their plane left in three short hours. She didn't want to leave.

God, he was beautiful but, there was much more to him than his physique. A wonderful lover, protective, along with what she had learned from the internet, he didn't like his woman showing too much skin, was a tea drinker and avid soccer player. So were they just fuck buddies? Cringing at the thought, it sounded so slutty.

Your own fault Saffron isn't this what you wanted . . . no strings? I should be happy, yeah right!

The first night before they had slept together, he stated, he couldn't start a new relationship. And she had been fine with that, so what had changed for her? How invested was she in Hyun Joong?



Thanking his trainer for pushing him so hard, he couldn't help but notice her eyes smoldered with hunger one minute then questions the next. What was going on in her head? Handing her the bottle of water, he bent to retrieve his boxers off the floor, along with his jeans, the nagging voice of Uncle still haunting his mind, "She needs to find herself before she can love you unconditionally".

Uncle told me to give her space. Except that she's charming, inventive, and passionate in her convictions as well as in bed. How does that spell, 'leave her alone'? Is going against Uncle's advice eventually going to cost me her love. Am I being too greedy?

Sighing, her fingers teased up his back, her sweet voice cooing as she kissed the marks that made him hers. *Is she mine? Me hers? And what about Mr. Big, is she over him?* Considering her heart was locked almost as tight as his, maybe this was just a fling. Did he want something more? There wasn't enough time before leaving the Island not to mention there was so much unsaid between them. And now she would have to deal with this morning incident on her own.

Back hugging him, she nuzzled the nape of his neck murmuring, "Why are you getting dressed, I was hoping you would walk around more, show me some provocative poses." Lying back down she pulled the sheet over her breasts as he stood zipping his pants.

“Well if you want food, I have to answer the door and unless you want me to do it buck naked, I need to get dressed. Besides, I’m sure it’s your turn to prance around posing for me, now isn’t it?”

Ripping the sheet from her body, he tickled her mercilessly, loving the way her boobs bounced about underneath his roving hands. Clutching at his fingers she turned away as she laughed, yelling for him to stop. Slapping her finch tattoo Joong snickered when she yelped, declaring, “I wanna see that finch dance Saffron, think you could make that happen?”

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SENSING something had changed, Saffron pushed up the sleeves of Joong’s sweatshirt, watching him gaze out at the ocean stirring a cup of tea, as they sat in front of the balcony doors.

The twinkling lights of the cruise ships bobbed in the calm sea waters, under a full winter moon. Wrapping the hoodie tighter over her breasts, the light breeze fluttered the sheer curtains around them. Damn he was being annoying with his one-word answers all through dinner. In an attempt to get his attention she skated a bare foot up the inside of his thigh.

“Okay, Joong what the hell is wrong with you? Not one word throughout dinner . . . talk.” Stacking their plates together with a clatter she shoved them aside, irritated as she gripped the silver coffee urn, watching it overflow her cup. “Oh shit.”



Taking the urn before she burned herself, he smirked. “It’s cool. Mianhae. I’ve gotten all moody on you.” Setting it down he reached under the table capturing her foot, trying to explain his actions for not inviting her this weekend. “Saffron you know she’s the biggest reason I didn’t want you to come. I knew she would cause



trouble. I just knew it.”

“I figured that when I ran into her last night. I’m not afraid you know, it’s just . . . she caught me off guard this morning.” Meeting his eyes, she dropped her spoon on the table, unmindful of the coffee stain spreading into the white cloth. “Can I ask you something?”

“De, anything,” Grinning, his fingers kneaded both her cool bare, feet.

Clearing her throat, she proceeded to ask, “When you met Chung A last evening did she show you prove of her pregnancy?” With the sound of waves washing up onto the sand in the background, she measured his reaction. Would he tell her the truth? Praying, ‘please say no’ . . . She had spent the last few hours doing things with him she never would have consented to with Ian. Nor was she ashamed. He brought out a side she didn’t even realize she possessed and that was a good thing, (only one of the reasons she’d moved here, new experiences).

“No, is that what she told you?” Squeezing her calves his eyes narrowed, not surprised that Chung A would lie to provoke her. *What else had she told Saffron about their relationship?*

“I knew she was lying,” Straightening up in anger, she scowled, wrenching her legs from his grasp, bumping one knee against the table, watching the dishes wobble and rattle precariously, Tears threatening her stupidity. *The bitch wanted her to doubt him by telling lies.*

“Come on Saffron, how else did she provoke you? ‘Cause I have to say, a cat fight was the last place I expected to find the owner of ‘The Hotness Café’.” A glint of annoyance in his gaze, Hyun Joong reached up, catching the plates before they toppled over spilling food all around them.

“It doesn’t matter, I won’t let my guard down again. I’m madder at myself for being dragged into a public fight.” Blinking the wetness away she coughed.

“You do realize that this will be all over the internet.” Regarding her with concern he crossed his legs sipping the hot tea, adding quietly, “Probably already is.” Loud laughing and footsteps echoed through the door as kids traveled the hallway.

Leaning back in her chair, a humorless smile crossed her lips. “Don’t you think I know that. And this isn’t my first scandal. I can handle it. The bigger problem will be Maud and SeRae, we’ve already gone head-to-head over breaking ‘Rule #1 - No dating the Idols’.”

“Aigoo . . . so make it my fault.” With a lopsided grin, Hyun Joong set his cup down, “Let me save the day. I can tell them I chased you and not the other way around. A little aegyo and I’ll get you the noonas forgiveness.”

Giving her a demonstration, he shrugged his shoulders, placing both fists under his chin and started whining in a high squeaky baby voice, “Mmm-mmm.”

“Oh my God Joong, that really doesn’t work, does it?” Laughing, Saffron shook her head, melting at the cuteness even as she asked.

A toothy smile broke out across his boyish face, “Yah, that’s ‘Idol 101’, hate doing it, but can’t deny it works every time.” Losing the grin his expression hardened as he reached over the small table his fingers caressing her left cheek, thankful the swelling had receded.

“I swear she will NEVER bother you again.” Cupping her chin his eyes bore into hers knowing he would never forget the cracking sound of Chung A’s hand meeting her innocent face.

“It’s okay Joong. Don’t be too hard on her. I have to take some of the responsibility and I can see her side. I took you away from her.” *Did she really?* Lacing her hands through his, Saffron rubbed the brown skin with her thumb.

“Aigoo, that’s BS, no you didn’t. I fell out of love with her long before you came along.” The seriousness in his eyes told her he wasn’t joking. She wanted to believe him. She needed to.

“Actually, I’m a little jealous of her, she’s in a position I would like to be in with you someday.” Cursing under her breath at the statement, she chastised herself inwardly, “Stupid, stupid, stupid, why would you say that, might as well of said the ‘L’ word.”

Spitting a mouthful of tea into the cup he let it clatter to the saucer in disbelief, “I have to be going deaf, did you say you wanted to have my baby . . .” Shooting his eyes up to hers, he gripped her hand. “Saffron Ryu are you confessing?”

Was that his heart pounding through his chest? If it wasn’t for his mandatory military service coming up he would buy her a house and give her as many red-headed babies with freckles as she could handle.

“Confess? I don’t understand . . .”

Snorting at her confusion, he attempted to explain, “Ummm . . . desire to stay by my side . . . be my girlfriend . . . American’s would say a monogamous relationship.”

“Oh shit, I said someday . . . I didn’t mean now.” Shocked, she caught her breath, rising in panic, yanking her sweaty hand out from between his grasp. Shoving the chair backward, she heard it crash to the floor behind her in her rush to the bathroom to escape him.

Hyun Joong stunned at her reaction jumped up grasping the bathroom door handle before it clicked shut. “Saffron, wait. Don’t run away.” Pushing his way in, he froze at the wild look in her eyes, observing her retreat to the edge of the counter, knocking a can of hair spray into the sink, the clatter echoing around the small space. Sad, he realized Uncle Ryu was right, she wasn’t ready for a real relationship.

“Baby, shhh, I wasn’t asking for commitment,” adding in a whisper, so as not to spook her, “it’s surprising, that’s all . . . calm down.” Relaxing, he leaned against the door; arms at his side waiting for her to come back down to earth.

The room was stifling, taking deep breaths she tried to quiet her racing heart at the words he’d uttered. Eyeing him standing there in all his manliness, his scent alone made her womanhood twitch.

“Sorry Joong, I don’t know why I reacted like that.”

Lying, she forced down a moan at the way his face lit up with her admission. *Babies, since when did she want babies?* Surveying the way his muscles bulged, arms, chest, and dear God especially the one between his legs, made her eager to please him like she had Ian. Give all of herself to him, body, mind, and soul. But, she didn’t think that was love. Was it? *Was losing her identity the price for loving him?*

“It’s not a problem, my feelings aren’t hurt . . . I can wait for someday.” Unwinding his body Hyun Joong tugged at his shirt collar meeting her in the middle of the floor. Hugging her tight, he observed his ‘Seung Jo’ smirk in the mirror, rejoicing in the knowledge Saffron had declared her affections for him. *Maybe, he was finally breaking through the wall surrounding her heart.*

Wiggling out of his arms Saffron gazed at Kim Hyun Joong. He had surpassed her fantasy of ‘Baek Seung Jo’. Who needed a fantasy when the real man was loving, understanding, and

willing to fulfill her every desire, he was perfect. Petting his cheek she gently kissed the
bowlike lips, the five o'clock shadow tickling her face . . .

“Joong let’s break up.”

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