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THE DEVIL'S RADIO



MARCH 13th, 2017 – 4:00 P.M. – REPORTER STEWY'S APARTMENT – L.A.

MULLING over his IPAD notes, Stewy smiled. Clearly, he was sitting on a gold mine of information involving the infamous Ryu sisters, and their Idol counterparts. His unusually revealing early morning phone call to a middle-aged housewife by the name of Helen Cobb, had opened a door of opportunity unlike any even HE had anticipated.



Oddly enough, having basically fallen in his lap, she'd afforded him an angle he'd never seen coming. Her online obsession with the sisters had brought her name to the forefront. When scrolling through the Hotness Café FB page, he'd picked up on her comments.

Calling Saffire the 'Ice Princess', and Saffron 'Red', her post gushed well-wishes and prayers for a full recovery, mentioning (of all things), their clandestine meeting at the S. Korean JeJu Island, 'Toscana Hotel' the winter of 2014.

Trying to stay ahead of the game and see the bigger picture, he'd taken the time to research her further, realizing before long that Helen Cobb, (not waitress Lisa) might well be his 'ace in the hole'. Her social media pages were filled with references to both sisters, particularly Saffire.

But, it was the posted photos from years ago that caught his attention. The twins, their parents, owner of the Toscana, Kim Junsu, Ian Carver III, and even KPOP group ‘JYJ’ member, Park Yoochun, all gathered round the dinner table at JeJu Island.

Squealing with delight at the prospect of getting an exclusive NO ONE else in the business could even imagine, he traced her to . . . yes . . . L.A. California. *Could life get any better?* Heart in his throat (for the first time since committing himself to a future in journalism) he called her directly, hoping she wouldn’t cut him off before pleading his case.

Moments later, having managed to gain her trust, he found himself with the promise of a live interview. Giddy with power he secured her permission to release the photos to the news media for what could only be described as a ‘human interest story’. *But, would they bite?*

Saffire was a local philanthropist, having opened the ‘L.A. Children’s Conservatory of Music’, while twin Saffron, was the entrepreneur, starting and overseeing three ‘Cup of Hotness Café’ franchises between Asia and now America. So, how and why Helen Cobb knew them as the ‘Ice Princess’ and ‘Red’ was a story, even he was excited to hear. Not to mention, getting the inside scoop on what Saffire’s connection was to Idol and hotel owner Kim Junsu? He, too had been a daily fixture at University Hospital, mooning over her bedside, teary-eyed in the hallway, holding 18-month old Sienna in his arms like a proud daddy.

Without saying a word, Helen’s FB photo’s spoke volumes. Saffire and Junsu intimately sitting side-by-side, heads together cozily. How did that fit into the larger picture? Unusually, (at possibly the same point in time) the depiction captured in the café, showed her arm-in-arm with a grinning Kim JaeJoong, both looking starry-eyed and in love.

‘Oh, what a tangled web we weave’, was all the crafty reporter could think. He was about to blow this story wide open, with only a few pictures, one woman’s personal account, and some money-hungry, gossipy hospital employees. *So, what would his upcoming interview with the obsessive woman entail? What were his points of reference? And, what sorts of questions could he push her to answer?*

Anxious to begin his planning he hesitated, for as much as he wanted to get to the interview and throw it all out there immediately, his gut told him he needed to bide his time. Experience also reminded him, too much, too soon could and would have him thrown into question by the very media outlets he was targeting.

Checking the time, he frantically outlined his method of attack to the evening news, his original motive morphing by the second. Tease #1 . . . the undisputed truth he'd managed to secure only hours earlier.

It had started by proving the Ryu sisters were secretly married to Idols, now . . . it seemed there was so much more!

4:30 P.M. -- UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL GIFT SHOP, L.A. CA

HANDS behind his back, JaeJoong strolled into the hospital gift shop, eyes peeled for jewelry. Unable to get an answer to his text from Serae about the wedding band, his only other choice was to go in search of one. This seemed like a logical first stop. After all, he'd read that sometimes couples married in the hospital for one reason or another.

Unmasked, and no longer concerned about concealing his identity he stepped toward the saleslady, blowing up balloons at a machine behind the counter.

“Annyeong.” Tipping his head, he pointed at the jewelry display, a shiny set of silver bands gleaming back at him temptingly. “I need to see this . . .” Hoping he'd chosen the right words in English, he smiled convincingly to back them up adding, “and . . . some of those,” pointing up toward the colorful balloon bouquet.

“Of course.” Her expression coquettish, she unlocked the case, pulling out the rings and setting them on the counter in front of him. “Congratulations.”

“Huh?” Focused on the brushed silver circles JJ's heart pounded rapidly. *What the hell was he doing? Yet again, falsely putting a wedding band on his finger without a proposal, a vow or a commitment from the woman 'sleeping' in another world on the 4th floor.* “Oh. Ye. Gamza.” Without even removing them from the box, he sighed turning it over to check the price. \$100.00

U.S. dollars. Chuckling at the insignificant amount of money for something so precious he rolled his eyes to the balloons.

“How many? What color?” she asked accommodatingly.

“Set, I mean three, sorry. Two white, one pink.” Fingers in the air, JJ’s expression went blank. One pink for Sienna, and two white . . . representing the significance of the snow in their lives. *He was about to make Saffire his wife. They would be a family forever. Even if right now, it was only in his heart.*

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“**IT’S** good to see you hyung.”

Swinging away from the counter, one hand on the ring box, Kim JaeJoong couldn’t have been more stunned. *This was America, and Xia was supposed to be safely tucked away in the S. Korean army, serving out his time as a military policeman. What the hell was he doing, leaning casually against the end of the gift shop counter, grinning like the Cheshire Cat?*

One question at a time, one thought at a time. Paying for the balloons and ring, JJ took Junsu by his arm hustling him toward the hallway. “Hyung? What the hell are you doing here?”

“That’s a stupid question Jae. I’m here to see Saffire. Thought I’d come down and get her something. I’ve tried calling you, several times. You must’ve been in the air.”



“How come no one told me?” Puzzled, JJ stuffed the ring box in his pocket, hoping the two-year lapse in their communication wouldn’t come back to bite him in the ass. *Surely, Hyun Joong knew he was here.*

“Don’t know. Ahjussi (Kyong) told me she was in an accident. Asked me to come.”

“Wha?” Scratching the back of his head instinctively, now JJ was more confused. “Why would he call you? I was already here.”

And, therein lied the real question. Trying desperately to piece together the series of events stemming from the moment he'd watched Saffire being wheeled upstairs to ICU, JaeJoong realized that Kyong and Sandra were still out of the country at the time. *Did that mean . . . No. He didn't want to go that far, to assume that this smiling-faced, 'brother' of his would have continued to have connections with Saffire and her family, including HIS daughter that he never even knew existed two years ago?* Sickened at the mere inference, JJ stiffened his fist around the balloon strings.

Picking up on the predictable change in his demeanor, Junsu sighed deeply, his eyes softening for his hyung. *This was his opportunity to tell the whole truth. But, certainly NOT the place, and considering the circumstances probably not even the time. Giving him the basics would have to do right now. For all his good intentions . . . the underlying issues dating all the way back to that fateful night in JeJu Island would have to wait.*

"It's a long story hyung. Why don't we go have coffee and talk about it?" Starting to walk away, Junsu figured his friend of many years would follow, but when JJ didn't budge he stopped short failing to turn around. "Is this how it's gonna be Jae? You asked. Do you want to know or not?"

"Pretty sure I can figure it out," JJ barked. "But . . . me hearing it, isn't going to wake her up now IS it?"

Still not facing the man Junsu knew would most likely beat the shit out of him if he stood in the way of his upcoming plans, his smile waned. "Ani, so why don't you put that wedding band on, go back up to her room, and propose properly then? Maybe that's what she needs to come back to life. I certainly can't do it for you."

"Wha?" Not expecting defeat JaeJoong stepped up beside him, feeling the regret prickle in the air between them.

"You know it's what you want. And, where you should be." Finally leaning back on his heels casually, Junsu hiked the backpack around his shoulder. "I was already headed back home when

I got the text about what happened last night. I knew you were already gone, so I only came back to see her one last time, make sure she was ok. We both know it's time for me to go."

Not sure how to respond, JJ stared over Junsu's head to the patterned wallpaper, behind. *Why did he feel like he was winning a war he'd never really had the privilege to fight in? Junsu wasn't a quitter. Not when it came to his career, his personal life OR his women. Later, when things had calmed down, he would contact him and get to the bottom of it.*

Reaching in to genuinely hug a pensive JaeJoong, Xia Junsu, his tone thick with sadness muttered, "Stay safe hyung, and take good care of your family. I'll leave first."

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4:30 P.M. - SAFFRON'S ROOM

RUFFLING his styled hair, Hyun Joong read an incoming text from Nurse Baker. With JJ returning and Saffron waking, he was finally breathing easier. However, with one crisis averted . . . another seemed to appear.

"Aishhh." What the hell had happened to make her faint? Damn, the woman was barely awake twenty-four hours, and already she was creating chaos.

Dealing with an ex-boyfriend, memory loss, and a fake marriage surly wasn't what he'd expected after leaving the Army. Deeming his life would be boring without the red-headed, fire-cracker he rocketed past the nurse's station, nodding at the surprised young women standing watch, before halting in front of her open door.

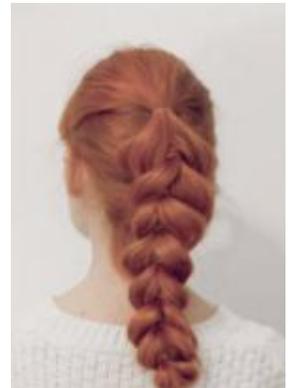
Not sure what to expect he entered cautiously. Vigilance was always a good plan where his Hani was concerned. The sight of an empty bed brought him up short. Searching with the room, he found her parked in front of the window amongst the countless stuffed toys, flower arrangements, and balloon bouquets, seemingly unharmed by her ordeal.

Even with the two years of separation, he was instinctively alerted by the rigid set of her shoulders . . . something was wrong. Composing himself, he followed the rope of her braid swaying like the dying pendulum of a clock. *What had happened, and where was mother?*



Exhausted after his run-in with Ian he'd confidently left Saffron in Sandra's care for what could only be described as a 'short reprieve'. Truthfully, he'd lived most of his life on four to five hours of slumber a day. This was no exception. Revitalized by early afternoon, he had already stepped in to help Maud make preparations for a smooth homecoming.

Strolling up behind Saffron's back, he viewed her staunch, blank reflection in the window. *Oh shit, his baby was pissed. Before ever uttering a word, he was dead meat.*



“Saffron?”

Meeting his alarmed expression via the window she rose, turning in one smooth motion while shoving an iPad into his face announcing, “Tell me HUSBAND . . .” (making a mockery of the title), “If I'm a married woman . . . explain THIS from three days ago on the Hotness Café's Facebook page, huh?”

Not surprised by the video depicting Ian slipping the huge diamond on her slim finger, Hyun Joong had hoped to keep it from her longer, (like 'after' her memory returned). Wrestling the tablet from her grip he couldn't help asking, “Was this why you fainted?” Clicking it off, he tossed it toward the bed growling under his breath, “Damn Caver, I told him it was too soon.”

His furrowed brows and piercing brown eyes should have frightened Saffron more or even escalated her anger . . . But, instead, it managed to set off a totally different set of emotions. Ones she currently didn't want to examine that closely.

“Don’t be mad at Ian . . . for once, he told me the truth. Honestly, Father’s the reason I fainted. Ian just happened to have good timing. He saved me from falling and getting more bruises, then brought me back into the room.”

By this time Joong knew frustration over Ian wasn’t the answer. “Father? Young . . .” Clamping his mouth shut, he almost bit his tongue, forgetting she thought Kyong was her father. Raising his palms, he added, “Wait, Ian and Kyong were together?” *Weren’t they currently running hot and cold with each other?*

“No, Mother and I were taking a walk, and we ran into him strolling a toddler. He said some really nasty things to me. About my SISTER . . . Saffire. Did you know I had a sister?” Already sure of his answer, she dropped her head muttering, “Humpf, stupid question, of course you did . . .” Touching both temples lightly, she squeezed her eyes closed, attempting to shut out the reality of the truth.

It was obvious the information had affected her. So much so, that she wasn’t even capable of looking him directly in the eyes. Attempting to understand her feelings he knew a hug would go a long way but, wasn’t sure now was the appropriate time. Placing both palms together he pleaded for her sympathy instead.

“Mianhae Hani, I wanted to tell you a lot of things but, just barely waking up from a coma, and learning about the awful accident . . . it wasn’t safe to push. You heard the doctor say your memories would come back sooner if they weren’t forced.”

Still massaging her temples, she lifted her head trying to focus on him. “I know. I know that it . . .”

Seeing his palms pressed together, her vision blurred. She was in a hotel room, (all but, naked in a bra and panties), hands together, begging forgiveness. “Please don’t be angry with me. I’ll do anything.” Then it was gone. Blinking, his blurry face morphed into her handsome husband clutching her shoulders frantically calling her name.

“SAFFRON are you okay?”

Shaking, she licked her lips. *Did she just have a memory from her past? Why did she assume it was a hotel room? Who did she want forgiveness from? Where the fuck were her clothes? Damn, she hated not remembering.*

Lovingly kneading Saffron's shoulders, when she started to slump, Hyun Joong entangled her in his arms, kissing the top of her head whispering in a thick voice, "Hani, stay with me. Don't leave me."

Engulfed by his warm body she heard the panic in his tone. Smelling the fear emanating from his skin gave her a sense of security that he cared but brought with it more questions. *Why would she forget him and the world where he lived? Was she happy or was her pain so great the only solution was to erase him entirely.*

Ian said not to trust him. Only she couldn't hold on to her anger. Mother liked him, even believed him . . . so why couldn't she? Sandra had even said Uncle was instrumental in getting the two of them together. How, and when? And, why on earth did he call her Hani? Where had the nickname come from? Did she even like it?

The headache began to pulsate from her temples to the base of her skull. Meeting his concerned gaze, she attempted a weak smile. Then suddenly a flash of him wearing a long jacket popped into her head. *Was it another hidden fact?* Sitting up in his grasp, she uttered questionably, "Oh, you own a coat with a skull on it, huh? You like skulls?"

His smile wide, the corner of Joong's eyes crinkled. "De, you remembered?" *Could it be this easy? All he needed to do was spend time with her and the memories would come?*

Hearing the happiness in his voice, Saffron scooted out of his grip, putting space between them, afraid to give him false hope. "Not really, just a glimpse, like a picture . . . nothing else." All she had were these strange perceptions of him. With the pain reduced to a slight throb, she needed to know the truth, unable to take anything on face value. "Why do you call me Ha Ni?"

Guiding her to the chair she'd vacated minutes before, his response came without thinking. "You remind me of a girl I knew. She was always daydreaming, clumsy, and persistent." Grabbing a blanket off the over bed table, he knelt to cover her legs, tucking it in gently around her.

"She sounds annoying." Entwining both fingers into the blanket Saffron peered up at him smiling meekly. *Was this dazzling man flirting with her?* "So, you married me, because I remind you of someone else?"



"Ani. Believe me Saffron you are ONE of kind." Rising he picked up a get-well plushie sitting on the window ledge. Facing her, he leaned on the edge tugging at the puppy's floppy ears trying to decide how much to say . . . *Did he keep the conversation light or lay it on the line?*

Glancing over at the flowers lining the room that filled it with an almost over-powering fragrance, he announced matter-of-factly, "Maybe we shouldn't get into this right now. You've already had a shock today, and it's getting late."

In the awkward silence that followed, she contemplated his words, examining the third finger on her left hand. There was no diamond to suggest Ian had succeeded in his quest for a proposal, but, at the same time . . . squinting over at the silver band Hyun Joong wore she needed to ask . . . "Kim Hyun Joong, where's my wedding ring?" Confused, she saw his jaw tighten, as he crossed his legs at the ankles.

Setting the toy aside to stall for time he was unable to meet her eyes. "At the house with the other things they gave me after the accident."

How the hell could he have forgotten to get her a ring? Maud and Serae were slipping. Shit, the Aunties had thought of everything, but the most important . . . Wedding rings came in pairs.

Now, was the first time she felt uneasy with him. Something was off. So, (like with Ian and his damned fiancé in 2014) she pushed. Determination flickering in her gaze, she faced him, boldly forcing the issue. "Why won't you answer my questions? Maybe Ian was right, and I shouldn't trust you."

“Ahhh . . . there would be my haunting Debutante.” Sliding his feet to the floor, he retrieved her brush he’d brought from the house. “Aigoo . . . mianhae for teasing.” Stepping behind her, seizing her braid, he tugged off the ponytail tie. “Why did I marry you? Normal reason, I love you, and the red finch tattoo on your ass. Your other question . . . Simple, I left your ring at the house knowing the hospital wouldn’t let you wear it. I know you watch Dramas.”

What the fuck? Did her heart speed up when he said, ‘love you’, or was it ‘tattoo on your ass’? There could only be a few ways he’d know about the finch. Doubting Ian had told him, what about Mother? No . . . that meant . . . they’d slept together, or at least he’d seen her naked. And, what other reason would they have to get naked, except sex? Whipping her head around she eyed him as he unraveled her braid.

“Seriously? That’s lame. And, I DON’T watch Dramas. Not even sure what those are, and don’t care. Anyway . . . let’s get back to my ORIGINAL question about what I saw online. If (and that’s a big IF) we’re married, why was Ian proposing to me in the video that, I will remind you, is all over the Internet. Pffft!” Flinging herself back to face the window, she felt the tug on the roots of her hair.

Easing up considerably, Joong chuckled, using short strokes around her face to gather the red fly-away strands.

“Hani, for someone who insists she doesn’t watch Drama’s, you’re being so dramatic. It’s a long story. But, arasseo . . . the highlights . . . You left Ian; we met in S. Korea; fell in love; separated for two years while I was in the Army, and I came for the café opening. You had the accident, and here we are . . . Happy?”

“Mmmm,” The tension left her body as he tended to her. She wanted to believe him but, a flea nagged at the back of her brain. *God, had he always brushed her hair? Where were those memories?*

Working meticulously dividing the red strands into three sections, Hyun Joong rambled. “I love your red hair. The first time I saw it was at Uncle’s funeral. You flew right past me and Jaejoong. All I saw was a perfectly rounded backside, clad in hip-hugging black slacks, striking

auburn hair whipping in the breeze.” Chuckling again, he stretched and twisted the ponytail tie, securing it. “Now, if I’d known about the sexy finch underneath those tight pants I probably would’ve jumped you the first night we met.”

Sitting there she listened to him chatting about them as a couple, her mind drawing a complete blank. Almost, like a white piece of paper on a computer screen, the cursor in the upper left-hand corner blinking as it waited for her to write THEIR story . . . the outline . . . contradicting accounts of events:

- 1) Joong wearing a coat with a skull on the front.
- 2) Her in a hotel room begging for forgiveness.
- 3) Her Uncle murdered by Cancer.
- 4) Marriage to a Korean Idol.
- 5) And, lastly . . . a twin sister, laying comatose next door.

It would make a good movie to be sure, but she wasn’t a writer . . . she was . . . a BAKER. Holy shit, another strange piece of her life.

Trembling at the sudden light breath, and brush of lips to her ear jerked Saffron full force, into the present. Shifting sideways ignoring the blanket as it dropped to her feet, she jumped from the chair spinning to face this ‘husband’, who claimed to love her.

“Please, don’t do that,” she scolded, discounting the pounding of her heart, and hearing the disappointment in his sigh as he stepped away.

“Mianhae, I . . . it’s . . . I miss you,” Sorry again, Joong stood still, arms down to his sides trying not to show how hurt he was at her rebuttal. The silence of the room was deafening, the air between them back to being awkward. He was moving too fast, and he recognized it. Still, it was hard not to gather her into his lap and hold her tight, expressing his love for her.

Quivering as if the room was chilly, Saffron acknowledged the pain in his eyes but, there was nothing tangible she could do. At least not now. She didn’t want him too close . . . But, if she was honest with herself . . . she did yearn to unveil the tattoo, to ask if it was same as he

remembered. And, that wasn't a lost memory but, a new one she sought to make with him. Suddenly timid, she straightened the light robe, clearing her throat.

“Joong, are you going to be here awhile? Later, I want to see my sister, Saffire.”

10:00 P.M. – SAFFIRE’S ROOM

STARING into the face of a complete stranger, Saffron clutched the bed rail, her knuckles white. The young woman in front of her, breathing lightly, was impervious to the drama playing out at her bedside. *Who was this Saffire? Yes, Mother had managed to answer some of her questions, but this . . . this was almost more than she could bear.*

Her grip on the rail tightening she felt her ‘husband’, place an encouraging hand to the small of her back whispering, “You okay?”

“No. I’m NOT okay. I should be feeling something. Anything, but I’m not.” *No flashbacks, no clues, nothing to suggest she’d ever seen or spent time with this blonde-haired sister.*

Her eyes darting toward the other handsome man in the room (who Hyun Joong called his friend JJ), only served to confuse the issue further. *Was he a husband too? He had on a silver wedding band. But . . . like her . . . Saffire did not.*

Not used to being made a fool of, especially after her years with Ian, she snapped out a curt remark. “Until SOMEONE can explain all this to me in a language I can UNDERSTAND . . . I don’t think I can accept being a Baker from S. Korea, with an unknown sister, who’s married to . . .” Hating to say it out loud for fear of causing more pain she found herself spitting out the words none-the-less, “An Idol musician for God’s sake!”

Uncertain of the consequences of her remarks on Saffire, JJ clamped his hand over her mouth, shushing her in the process. “AIGOOO . . . she can hear you. Don’t you remember being asleep and hearing voices in the room?”

Hyun Joong’s response was agonizingly similar, as he nodded for his friend to stop, having to agree that what Saffire needed was positive conversation to help give her the will to wake up.

“Once you remember Saffron, this will all make sense. Me; Saffire; everything. Even Jae. Right hyung?”

“De.”

Exhausted from worry, JJ dropped his fingers from Saffron’s lips already regretting his rashness. A run in with Junsu, too much caffeine, not enough sleep, and wishing he could turn back time was causing him to react in ways he never thought he would.

The hour was getting late, pushing 10:00 at night and all parties were standing at the brink of their emotions.

Saffron sighed, collapsing at the foot of the bed, her stiff resolve weakening quickly. “Sorry. It’s just that . . . this is all so confusing. It’s giving me a massive headache. So much information, so many questions. What I really want to do is just go back to sleep and wake up again when it all makes sense.”

Sympathizing with her plight, Hyun Joong knelt beside her, stroking away a strand of her fiery red hair. “We get it. Come on. It’s nearly bedtime. Maybe this was too much for one day. I’ll take you back to your room.”

Standing simultaneously, she agreed allowing him to encircle her waist, and then . . . the 10:00 o’clock news came on. Not having paid much attention to the drone of commercial voices until then, the three in the room couldn’t help overhearing . . .

“And, tonight we begin with this . . . A Breaking News, Personal Interest Story. Reports tell us that local ‘Cup of Hotness Café’ owner, Saffron Ryu has finally woken up out of her two day coma, following the March 11th, accident involving her sister Saffire Ryu and 18 mo. old niece.”

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