

CHAPTER Seventeen

(Part 3)

“The coffee’s ready, I smell Heaven.”



Sunday, December 21st, 2014

3:00 P.M.

Cup of Hotness Café – Outside the Front Door

IT was difficult to tell who was more agitated at the impending situation. Standing outside the front door of the café, stomping their feet on the snowy stoop, the gathering of estranged family members, huffed and puffed in the cold afternoon sun, grumbling and grappling for seniority.

Kyong, his angry wind-chapped cheeks puffed out in disgust, stood stoically between his two sisters and ex-wife much like a guard standing watch over the Queen’s palace in England.

“I’m not sure what you think you’re doing here. You weren’t invited and no one really wants to see you. You need to leave. NOW.” Barking orders, one finger pointed in the direction of the road it was clear he wasn’t giving in, no matter what.

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“**T**HAT was clearly the doorbell. Father’s yelling at someone.” Sniffing, Saffire brushed the loose hairs from her face, fixated on the secret door opening, half expecting him to come barreling through, demanding to know what was going on with them.

“Oh hell . . . they WOULD all show up at the same time.” Placing the worn letter she’d been reading back on the pile with care, Saffron wasn’t sure if she was ready for answers now. *What if the secrets Uncle had been keeping from them for years was for their protection? God . . . more questions.*

With stealth like speed they were up, rushing into the living room, Saffire catching the doorknob, Saffron tripping over the corner of a stray box slamming face first into her back.

“Ooofff . . .” Pushed forward into the hard wood, she cursed out loud. “Shit watch it Saffron, you trying to kill us or what?” Tugging on the handle she peered out toward the landing at the bottom of the steps. Turning around one finger to her lips she shushed her anxiously. “Sssshhhh”.

“Sorry, I can’t hear.” Cringing at the loud squeak from the old wooden door, Saffron forced her out onto the stoop.

Holding their breath, two sets of blue eyes flashed toward the empty Café vestibule. Showing their twin nature they each placed a palm to their hearts simultaneously in relief at it being empty.

“Father will take care of it. We don’t want them to know we’re home, remember?” Saffire’s voice was solemn as squatting down side-by-side they perched on the top step listening to the loud exchange coming from outside the café entrance.

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“**W**E have a Search Warrant. THAT’S what we’re doing here. You stand aside. We have rights too, and this doesn’t concern you any more BROTHER. It’s out of your hands.” Waving the rolled up piece of paper in the air above Kyong’s head, his oldest sister (always the bully) scrunched her eyes in warning, much like she used to do as a child before proceeding to beat the living tar out of him.

Deadlocked, he stared her down unmoving, even as she rang the bell yet again, hoping one of the wretched ‘nieces’ would appear, taking matters out of his hands.

“You’re NOT going to stop us. We’re prepared to stand here as long as it takes.” Hands on her hips she became the ‘other’ guard, stubbornly showing him she wasn’t going anywhere.

“Oh please. The BOTH of you. Do we have to do this right now?” Tugging on Kyong’s arm, Sandra pleaded with her ex-husband to no avail. “Kyong. This isn’t the time. If they have a Search Warrant there isn’t much we can do.” Her voice so soft she could barely be heard, Sandra seemed the only one of the four to be in control of her senses and her emotions. “It’s Christmas for God’s sake.”

“Humpf CHRISTMAS? For who? And, what the hell has gotten into you lately? Since when do you side with the enemy?” Flinging his arm away from Sandra in protest, Kyong turned on her for disrupting his last ditch attempt to prove to his sister he had some balls.

“I’m not on anyone’s side. And, clearly this is more about you than it is me.” Responding with a calm reserve that none of them recognized, Sandra clasped her hands tightly in front of her, her eyes steely with a different kind of determination. “But as far as this issue . . . there IS something that can be done . . . especially if no one’s home. And, it looks that way doesn’t it? So, why are you bothering?” Facing the unkind sisters her back bristled indignantly. “Legally, you should know if the girls aren’t home, it doesn’t matter if you have a Search Warrant or not, you can’t gain access. You’ll have to come back. Or are you truly prepared to sit out here in the cold and wait for them?”

The middle sister stepped off to one side blinking into the bright sunlight bouncing off of the freshly fallen snow. She knew her siblings well. Neither of them were prone to backing down, no matter what the case. She would have to play the go-between again, making her continue to hate her role in this crazy, dysfunctional family.

Without saying a word to any of them, she lifted her car keys in the air, dangling them solicitously announcing to the two older ones she was leaving, whether they gave in or not. She hadn't been particularly fond of the idea in the first place, and the last person she wanted to come in contact with today was Sandra Kroes.

Now, by a sad quirk of fate . . . here she was. Standing front and center, and alongside Kyong of all people. Whatever happened to the 'rules of separation' when individuals divorced? The cold and calculating ex of her little brother always seemed to interfere just when he needed her to disappear the most. *Why was that? And, today of all days. They were 'both' here from America, standing at the front of the closed café. Oh the bad luck.*

Sticking his chest out ceremoniously Kyong knew at this point, it didn't matter who managed to coerce these two bitches from off the café stoop, him or Sandra . . . they just needed to get the hell out. His brother's estate had been decided weeks ago, the girls were in charge and why they were still chomping at the bit to find something to change that he didn't know.

Watching in satisfaction the sister with at least a modicum of sense, walked away, without ever saying a word, deliberation written all over her aging face. Now, hopefully the other would follow, and the meeting he and Sandra had been summoned to by the girls, could finally commence.

Having met her match, the oldest 'Sister from hell' spun on her heel in the snow, kicking up the flakes as she went, stomping toward the already running car, her lips pursed in fury at losing the opportunity to scour Young Jae's apartment for more information. *DAMN KYONG anyway. Why was he still protecting the nieces 'and' the café? He had no vested interest in it. Or did he?*

Watching the car tires spin on the slick, snowy road Kyong leaned against the brick wall, his arms folded in satisfaction as it rolled away. Pulling the door key from his pocket he handed it to Sandra, a smirk crossing his lips as the sun caught the silver, glinting in the brightness.

"Here go on in, I'll stand watch for a few minutes, make sure they don't come back. You know the girls are in there. They just called us not less than thirty minutes ago." Even though he hadn't been able to exert his own authority he was grateful they were gone. "By the way, nice work." Complementing the woman he'd learned to avoid over the years was something he wasn't used to doing but, right now it seemed appropriate. "You always DID know how to put them in their place. Pretty sure that's why they hate you so much."

Taking the key with a degree of hesitation, Sandra wasn't sure if he had just been nice to her or not, considering they hadn't spoken once since leaving the hotel together. Her stomach rolled uneasily with the anticipation of what was about to commence in the presence of the two daughters she had exposed more information to, than this man before her was even aware of. She knew, his suddenly considerate behavior was about to fade away as soon as he set foot inside the front door and found out.

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“**O**H shit they're coming . . . mooovvve, hurry.” Jumping up Saffire tugged at her sister's sweater coercing her to get going, feeling suddenly like a ten-year old caught sneaking down the staircase at one of her father's dinner parties listening to the musicians talk about their work.

“Let go you're choking me,” Complaining, Saffron rose, trying not to lose her balance as Saffire hauled her back into the apartment, unable to understand what all the fuss was about. *Hadn't they asked their parents to come over?*

Yanking the neckline of her top back down with one hand the other flared back at her sister in distress. Darting over and around the living room clutter, they ran headlong through the curtain of the secret door with the sound of footsteps bearing down on them, forgetting to close it in their haste.

“Girls? I'm here. Your father's downstairs.” Tapping quietly on the partially opened apartment door, Sandra pushed it gingerly, half expecting to see the twins engrossed in Christmas decorating, or wrapping presents. Finding no one she stepped inside, slipping off her coat and boots, bemoaning the cold penetrating gust of air that met her bare arms in the short sleeved T-shirt. *Why was it such an ice box in here?* “Damn, where are they? They just called.” Muttering under her breath she skated across the bare wooden floor toward the bedroom entrance, checking for open windows.

Swiveling back around, hands on her hips she took stock of the cramped, and cluttered apartment, looking like it had been ransacked by a burglar. Her eyes following the trail of newspapers, magazines, boxes and old paperwork strewn everywhere, she finally spotted it . . . he partially pulled back tapestry that for years had hidden the secret entrance to Young Jae's private dining room. *What were they up to?* Clutching her throat, instinct told her this wasn't

merely an attempt to clean up the residuals of an elderly man's obsessions. This was a fact finding mission.

If the girls had discovered the secret doorway perhaps they knew the rest of the story as well. Surely, she wasn't too late to stop them? Obviously, her one-on-one meetings with them had served only to peak their interest, bringing more questions to the surface. That hadn't been her intent. She'd spoken up in order to buy them all some time . . . time to merge into unfamiliar territory slowly. But, definitely not like this. What if that was the reason they had called this hasty, unexplained meeting?

Panicking, a blanket of dread forced itself through her upper body, paralyzing her in the memories of another time. Blinking away the tears threatening to give away her inward devastation, telltale signs of Young Jae's life laid naked and exposed before her, ripping through her locked and shackled heart.

Suspended in time, and drawn by a mysterious magnetism she shivered nervously, feeling the tapestry give way under her fingers as placing one foot gingerly in front of the other, she focused on the past, entering into an intimacy of her own making. Hesitating momentarily, she faced her memories of Young Jae head on, hearing his soft, tender voice, much like she had in JeJu, (saving her from the brink of death). Clearly, if he had let her finish what she'd started that night, who would have been privy to what only the two of them knew? It was as if he had her by the hand, pulling her forward, urging her to take a final stand. A stand for their love and what was left to accomplish, even in death.

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SEEING their mother's figure come into focus through the opened passageway, the sisters scrambled around the tiny area, tossing paperwork and photos back into boxes, not knowing quite what to expect. *Even though they had scores of questions for both parents, 'this' had not been their destination of choice to begin the inquisition at. And, where was Father? How would they explain away a link from the apartment straight into this tiny room under lock and key?* But, the opportunity passed them by, because instead of the stony, icy greeting common to Sandra's appearances, her entrance into the space was nothing short of ethereal.

Glistening a swath of cheerful light through the window, the sun bounced off the casually dressed, middle-aged woman's blondish hair, its' unrelenting ability confirming the wetness of

her tearstained face. With the innocence of a child searching for long, lost treasure she glided across the floor as if on a cushion of air, her unsuspecting daughters swearing she resembled an angel.

Why did Mother seem so sensitive yet unresponsive, despite coming through the secret door with the disarray of Uncle's personal belongings strewn about them? It wasn't like her.

“Mother?” Standing quickly, Saffron's voice cracked in question. Thinking she should apologize for digging up information on the family, she stopped herself mid-thought. *Why? They had every right to search out and examine whatever they found in the apartment or the café. After all, they were the owners.* Nudging Saffire discreetly she whispered, “Shit. You think she's okay?”

“I don't know, she didn't even notice the door.” Responding quietly, fearful of her mother's biting tongue and backlash of expletives, once she came around and realized what they'd really been up to, Saffire backed into the corner, unsure of what to do next. *Maybe the list of questions hadn't been the smartest idea after all. It could've waited until after Christmas.*

“Hmmm, just a minute girls.” Ignoring their hushed conversation, Sandra stopped directly in front of the small broom closet, one hand out on the wall to steady herself.

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A more than curious Kyong tipped his head into the small space, wondering why the tapestry he'd seen when visiting after Young Jae's death covered a mysterious hole in the wall. Overwhelmed by the presence of his past spread out around them he coughed nervously to announce himself, stuffing his large hands in both pockets, but getting no reaction from the girls or Sandra.

He knew his brother had been a private man but, this seemed a little far-fetched. This opening connected the apartment to the small private dining room that Maude and SaRae had stripped bare before giving up the key to. *Was it more than a just a dining room? A room for gambling perhaps? Entertaining women? Or perhaps just 'one' woman?*

Putting two and two together immediately the anger crossed his face. Leaning against the door jamb for support, he licked his full lips belting out tersely, “What the hell is she doing? She looks like she's just seen a damn ghost.” *A ghost. A spirit, an apparition. Of course Young Jae*

was here. The room was too cold for him not to be. What could possibly keep him silent here on his own turf?

Pausing, as if on command, Sandra listened, hearing Kyong roaring behind her, the girls scuffling feet on the hardwood floor, sounds of the city below the large glass window, and even the ticking of her own watch.

Attempting to squelch his discomfort in front of the girls, Kyong went silent, continuing to follow Sandra's silhouette as she reached toward the back panel of the wooden closet, pushing it gently. This 'dining room' was his brother's domain. And, now it seemed . . . Sandra's as well because clearly, she was up to something. Choking down his fears, at that very moment, all he wanted was to make a beeline for the front door, and follow his wretched sisters back out into the frigid December day. *Christmas be damned.*

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“SANDY . . . Open it, you know what's inside. It's time they knew.” The tinkling of Young Jae's voice in Sandra's ear, left her determined but, confused. *Did he actually WANT her to divulge all the secrets they'd hidden for years? Surely he knew what the repercussions would be?* Immersed in a bubble of her own making, her heart pounding out of her chest, she cursed Kyong for forcing her hand so many years ago, and Young Jae for loving her so desperately. *She could do this. She 'had' to do this.*

Whispering, “I'm so sorry Young Jae,” she watched as the wooden panel popped forward, revealing the small safe, nestled snugly into the wall joists. Only the two of them had known the location and combination of the secret safe. With shaky fingers, blocking out the mutterings of Kyong at her back, and the rush of her girl's breath she twisted the rusty lock. As the numbers clicked into place, a small smile curved up at the sides of her mouth. *In here was the key to not only the truth, but her girl's futures as well.*

“Sorry Young Jae? Really? What the fuck? Is there another copy of the will in there that I don't know about?” Slicing through the silence of the moment Kyong's irritated, questioning voice rang out. In long strides his legs made short order of the small square room, dotted with all the memories of his miserable life growing up in the shadow of his younger brother.

About to grab Sandra's shoulder, he met with a force so resilient and unmoving, it thrust him backward, knocking him off balance into the wooden bench, rattling it under his weight as he

fell. “DAMN YOU YOUNG JAE!” Blurting out his deceased brother’s name, he quivered angrily unable to catch his breath, or recoup his dignity. He’d been bested. Not once, not twice . . . but three times over the last forty-eight hours.

“What’s going on? What about Uncle? What did he do?” Jumping to her father’s aid, Saffire grabbed his hand, tugging on it unapologetically. The electricity in the room raising the hair on her arms to attention, prickled her uncomfortably as she scanned the scenario laid out before her.

And then she saw him. Bathed in the light from the window, the shadowed figure of Uncle Ryu. Standing serenely between her mother and the wall, smiling. The smile she remembered so dearly. The smile that told her he was proud of her accomplishments. The smile that forever said he cared. The smile she leaned on as a child, when times and relationships were tough. *Did Saffron see him too? Dear God, she was going to faint.*

“He didn’t do anything but . . . love me. Isn’t that right Kyong?” Flinging around to face him, Sandra’s hand closed over the objects in the safe her clear eyes flashing in protection of what she treasured most. His daughters. The cold steel of the key to a safe deposit box dug into her palm, along with the rough binder of the small diary, her ticket to emotional freedom.

Huffing and puffing, Kyong threw himself off the bench yelling angrily, his finger quivering in line with her nose. “You made your choice Sandra. BY GOD, WE BOTH DID!”

“And, now it’s over.” Swirling the lock she closed the compartment with finality, dipping the small key into the pocket of her jeans.

“What’s over? What the hell are you both talking about?” Distraught that her parents were talking in riddles she couldn’t understand, Saffron felt a heaviness in her chest as the whirlwind of information she and Saffire had gathered began to paint a much clearer picture.

Mother was the mysterious affair her Uncle had hidden away from the world. Not the cleaning lady, or some random stranger. Her very own Mother, the cold-hearted, distant woman who’d claimed to love her all these years was the tall, thin dinner companion with the light hair in Saffire’s vision on the night of her date with JJ . . . Right here in this very spot.

Unsure how she felt about the information she turned to her sister for support however, her eyes were drawn to Mother instead. For standing directly beside her was the feathery outline of her recently departed Uncle. *She didn’t believe in ghosts. Nonetheless, this was his sanctuary. Why*

wouldn't he be here? Startled, she tripped toward Sandra her hand out thinking maybe she could touch him one last time. But, in the few seconds it took her to register his presence, he floated up into the air, dissipating into a white misty orb, and was gone.

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“No! WAIT!” Grappling for something to hang on to Young Jae felt himself rising off the floor, his already weightless body floating uncontrollably toward the ceiling. “Am I through here? I haven’t said good-bye. This isn’t the way I wanted to end things.” Whining at his heavenly dilemma he stared down at the quartet of bodies below him.

“Don’t hate me Kyong. I know how it must’ve hurt you. We all did what we had to do at the time. Even though it didn’t make sense. And, Sandra . . . my sweet, sweet Sandy. I always knew you had it in you.” Whispering at her back, he watched her tuck the safe deposit key into her jeans pocket with determination.



unsure why he blinked real tears, he sensed them pooling in the corners of his eyes, longing to hold onto the girls the most. The precious twins he’d nurtured into adulthood from afar. Worried to the end, he wondered what would become of them if he left now. What about JJ, Junsu and Hyun Joong? Would his hands be permanently tied? Would they have to go it alone? Could he come back as an Angel? Was he even headed to Heaven?

Leaving the sights and sounds of Seoul below, he was met by an indescribable brilliance. Was the sun on his face just that overwhelming, or was it something else? Even in sorrow he felt so lightheaded, free and unencumbered, having a sense of divine peace. Peace . . . that was it. With the opening of the safe, his work here on earth was done.

He was finally crossing over.

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“**I**’D say the cat’s finally out of the bag wouldn’t you father?” Saffire stood stoically, shivering in the cold, drafty room. “You never loved mother did you?” Her voice terse with understanding, all she could envision was the tenderness in which her Uncle had touched the cheek of the woman across from him at the dining room table. And, the unconditional love she’d felt emanating from the room each time she’d visited. It was all beginning to make perfect sense.

Stunned that he would be called out by the daughter he’d raised without question Kyong stuttered out a quiet response. “I did. I do dammit.”

Instantly feeling the room go warm, Saffire hadn’t quite expected that answer. *Lies . . . how could he lie in the midst of this truth telling mission? Betrayal was a word she was more than accustomed to dealing with. It flew on the wings of her relationships with so-called friends at school, Antonio, Mother, and now . . . where would it take her from here?*

Sandra, disregarding her ex-husbands bleak confession of love coming years too late and not wanting to waste another minute, proceeded headlong toward the secret opening, diary in hand, feeling the weight of the world lifted from (at least) her shoulders.

“Follow me, we all need to talk. REALLY TALK. But, not in here.”

Nothing remained in this place for her but, regrets and unsaid words. The story of the tangled love affair that had transpired years ago, robbing her of the life she’d dreamed of, was finally going to be told . . . laying her precious Young Jae to rest at last.

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Cup of Hotness Café – Downstairs

6:00 P.M.

WHERE had the time gone? The coffee cups, emptied long ago sat stacked precariously one on top of the other, threatening to topple over onto the café table.

No longer able to face each other directly, the four figures scattered in



various areas of the dining room spoke volumes. An eerie tension filled the quiet room, void of loud voices and sobbing for the first time in hours. It was difficult to discern who had been affected the most. Not an easy pill to swallow for the already dysfunctional family, this new discovery that Sandra Kroes had hoped would clear the way for reconciliation was merely the catalyst that would further split their relationships.

Kyong stood leaning across an empty table toward the hallway, face to the bare wall, his mind blank, studying the peeling slivers of paint in his line of vision. *If this wasn't hell then he didn't know what was. The sound of his own voice years earlier continued to suck the life out of him the longer he stood contemplating its final end. "Take her from me and I'll destroy you. Everyone will know what a disgusting whore you really are. Including the man you claim to love more than life itself."*

He'd taken it back in the bottom of a liquor bottle over and over in the years that followed. Hating himself the most for not seeing the truth from the very onset. Guilt, shame and remorse were only a few of the emotions that played throughout the remainder of his days alone . . . without Sandra, or Saffron. His perfect little family destroyed, never to be replaced again, at any cost. Leaving him bitter, and distant. Barely able to stand the sight of the daughter, far away in Chicago he could never claim.

Now, how was it possible that in the course of a few short days he had lost not only his business but, what little thread of a relationship he had with both of Young Jae's daughters? And, to what end? Only for the sake of allowing his already dead brother to 'rest in peace'. There would be NO peace going forward. Not for him or anyone else. Should he have kept his mouth shut that day long ago? Played the game? Would it still have ended up here? His closed fist pounding the hollow wall in despair, rattled the silverware in the cart beside him.

And still . . . Sandra, erect and serene, sat behind the empty tower of coffee cups folding and twisting her paper napkin quietly, satisfied at the outcome of her own decision. Her tears long gone, she knew it could only get better from here on out. Hadn't she herself already given up her icy, fake persona, longing for the sensitive soul she'd been as a young, carefree woman in love?

Shaking her head in disbelief at her own courage, she knew the secrets she'd let fester in her heart and soul had finally been freed, despite the fallout. She had to believe that in the end . . . everyone would accept the truth and move on. With keen eyes she followed the room around to

her daughters, sitting side-by-side, sprawled out against the bottom of their precious 'Hotness Wall', heads against the newly painted surface, legs touching, each lost in their own thoughts and emotions.

As little girls, there had never been a time when she'd seen them together like this, engaged only in each other. Never able to hold hands . . . whisper and share toys. *Where was the justice? They'd been robbed of not only their true parentage but, a childhood with each other in the process. For whose benefit?*

Now, after the fact . . . the money, careers, prestige, and pride seemed irrelevant in the face of their obvious hopelessness. The man they had all loved was already gone. None of them able to see or mourn him in the way they should've. Not as a lover, husband, or father. Except for the girls, they had all been a party to the secret, even his wretched sisters.

Smiling slightly, it satisfied her that those two had never known Young Jae had two beautiful daughters that (if nothing else) went through life carrying his name, and now would be his legacy. That meant more to her than just his reputation as a singer-songwriter. Where she'd been unable to, the girls would need to continue keeping his memory alive. Of that she was glad. Now that it was all over they could stand tall acknowledging that one of the greatest musicians' and composers S. Korea had ever seen was indeed their father. It was no wonder sensitive little Saffire had been drawn to the world of music and art. How sad that Saffron had not followed in their footsteps. That had been entirely her fault.

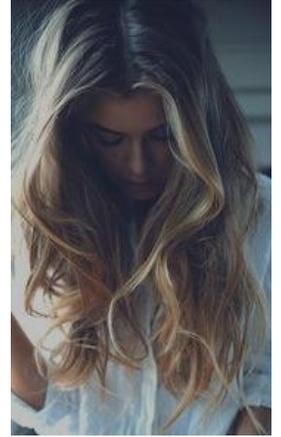
Staring at the daughter she'd raised almost single-handedly over the last twenty something years she caught the choke of a sob in her throat. In her attempt to make a statement she'd allowed herself to bring up the daughter Kyong dismissed, and Young Jae cherished (but couldn't claim), in the very worst way. Going forward, there would be lots of making up to do in order for both girls to truly understand.

Saffron blinked her eyes open, hearing Mother's light cough in the distance. *She had a lot of nerve. What the hell was she still doing here? Either of them. They'd dropped their little bomb, letting it explode all over her and Saffire, and now what? They were going to hang around to see if they could run interference and clean up the mess? They sickened her.*

"You can go home now. Both of you." Randomly barking out the announcement she pushed off the wall, standing abruptly. "I think you've done enough. I don't know about Saffire but, I'm overwhelmed and stressed out. I need to be alone."

Snatching the coffee cups from the table as she swept by her head held high, she felt the top one wiggle against her and crash to the floor at the bottom of the bar. Paying no attention to the shattered shards of china bouncing around the tile floor she continued with determination on her quest to the kitchen.

Jumping up to follow her, Saffire rushed to attend to the mess, quietly heading to the closet to retrieve the dust pan and broom, swiping tears from her face as she went. Mother's head turned but, otherwise unmoving, she stayed the course, letting them say and go at will. They deserved that much.



“Well, I don't know about you Sandra but, I think that's our cue we're not wanted here any longer.” Stepping away, Kyong strode past his ex-wife grabbing his coat from the bannister, muttering under his breath, “not surprised.” Slipping one long arm into the sleeve he frowned at Sandra in relative disgust. “Didn't you hear her? Are you coming? Let them have their space. God knows they need it.”

Nodding in agreement, the tall woman sighed, rising rigidly. There was nothing left to say. Reaching down into her pocket she pulled out the thin silver safe deposit box key. Cradling it in one hand, she closed her fingers around the old worn diary and stepped toward the bar area.

Passing Kyong just as he slammed out the front door in frustration, she touched Saffire's bent back lightly before resting the key and diary on top of the bar in front of her. Flinching at her warm hand, what Saffire really wanted to know was, ‘Why was she leaving now, just because of Saffron?’ She had so many more questions.



Loud enough for her other daughter to hear her in the kitchen she announced, “Your birth certificates and everything else you need to finally start your lives as Young Jae's daughters is in the safe deposit box at the bank. You're both listed as family members with access. He loved you both so very much. And, he didn't just leave you the café.” The beating in her chest intensifying in finality she looked upward at the ceiling, hoping he was looking down on them, and would forgive her for waiting so long.

“You know this was all for the best.”

Their silence didn't deter her as slipping on her coat, she stepped out into the dimness of early nightfall missing Saffron's final cutting remark as the door slammed shut behind her.

"Go ahead Mother. That's what you're good at. Walking away." Staring down at the broken pieces of porcelain in Saffire's dustpan all she could think was, she'd treated this cup just like their lives. Watching them fall, then walking away . . . leaving them shattered.

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