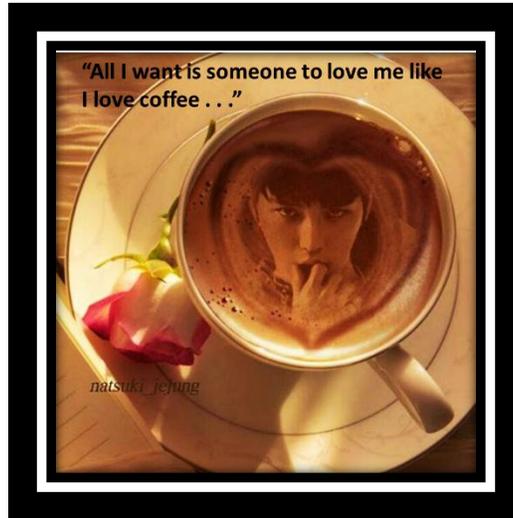


CHAPTER TWENTY

“All I want is someone to love me like I love coffee . . .”



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Wednesday, December 24th, 2014

4:45 P.M.

Gangnam, S. Korea – Cup of Hotness Café

LOVE comes in all shapes and sizes. A word . . . a gesture . . . a look. A gift as small as candy . . . or as extravagant as a sparkling diamond. Only when it bombards us with expectations, do we become resentful, losing ourselves to the feelings of entrapment and confusion.

A hotbed of unresolved emotions followed Saffire Ryu Christmas Eve day standing amongst the chaotic clutter of tree trimmings, her artistically keen eye focused on too much glitter and not enough substance.

Without the hustle and bustle of patrons in the café, and quiet Christmas music playing in the background she was feeling the loneliness of her first holiday away from Malibu and the comradery of friends yet again.

All the presents, neatly wrapped and awaiting their fate, sat stacked on the floor beside her as scratching her head anxiously she attempted in vain to dismiss the scores of loving text messages blowing up her phone between both her persistent suitors, JJ and Junsu.

Now, in the aftermath of the past few days, coming to grips with her parentage, warring with herself over buried hurts and feelings, her triangle with the two Idols seemed to take center stage in her life.

Why, only a few short weeks ago had the Saffire Ryu she thought she knew stepped away from everything she held dear just because of a man? And, why for God's sake was the new Saffire of today basing her entire future on one night in a cotton candy paradise? Exactly where 'did' she stand? Her gut told her JJ would send her to heights she'd never experienced before. But . . .

Turning to sit down, she sipped the now cooled cup of coffee and eggnog she'd made before tackling the Christmas tree. There 'was' a BUT . . . would those heights suddenly come crashing down around her like the split second he'd dissed her without a moment's hesitation when on the arm of a solicitous friend or fangirl? Mother wasn't able to handle an Idol's lifestyle with Uncle, her father. Could she? Could she really?

The warm spicy liquid eased down her throat, finding solace in the pit of her empty stomach, as it growled with satisfaction. Her menu of the last few days, consisting of the bizarre combination of chocolate, mac n' cheese, liquor, cookies and pastries wasn't exactly lending itself to a rejuvenation of spirit or enlightenment.

She thought she'd chosen . . . Especially after the dream of Junsu fading into an empty void, and Uncle's whispered words to her about JJ in the dining room. It seemed instead that now, in the face of reality, those things had done nothing to help her come to a single and final decision. *What 'would' it take? If only she could remember her night with Junsu.*

Sighing, she re-focused on the tree, dipping back into the large ornament box, pulling out a glass bulb with the saying, 'Our first Christmas together' on it, and no date. Who did it belong to? The rest were the normal, regular type of tree bulbs, some gaudy; some old; some new. *Had it been Mother and Uncle's? Had they gotten it together? Surely not. She had been a married woman. Secretly flying to Korea to be with him whenever she could get away. Or was this before that? Pre-pregnancy? Before her decision to marry father, and change the lives of everyone around her.*

Written meticulously in both English and Korean she could almost feel the importance of it to Uncle as she held it between shaky fingers. *Was he here with her? Was he trying to communicate a message of some sort? Why after several hours of decorating, with her mind a jumbled mix of thoughts and indecisions had 'this' particular ornament showed up in the bottom of the box?*

“What are you trying to tell me Uncle . . . father?” Staring into it, her whispered question hung in the balance. Then, suddenly a flood of memories consisting of bits and pieces of Junsu’s beaming face, lovingly touching her hair as he carried her through the living room and laid her atop the large king-sized bed. Their conversation, poignant and scattered, she heard his soft voice in her ear telling her he loved her, and the unmatched passion that followed.

The sound of the glass ornament crashing to the tile floor startled her out of her buried memories, one tear finding its way down her cheek, wetting the material of her sweats as it fell.

A gurgled “NO”, eked from between her lips, as she wiped and re-wiped her face knowing in her heart that not only had she just shattered one of her ‘now’ father’s treasured possessions, she had shattered Junsu’s heart that night as well. His touching confession, had been rendered genuinely, and she’d tarnished it without barely a second thought. So, why did he still care? JJ was and would always be right about her. She was a bitch. No better than mother who’d stomped on Uncle’s heart to her own selfish gains.

Grappling for some semblance of reality, fixated on the glass pieces of the Christmas bulb, she lost herself in its brokenness. This roller-coaster ride she called life was stripping her of everything she held dear, causing her to question whether being in this place, with an uncertain future ahead of her was something she could honestly handle.

Two amazing men cared for her, why she didn’t know. Was she capable of returning that devotion by giving only one of them her heart ‘and’ her soul? She didn’t know that either. Mother had proven it was possible to love more than one man, and still not choose the right one. Now, the father she’d always known as Uncle was gone . . . and unable to hold and comfort her in her uncertainty. She’d sensed his choice had always been JJ. Two short days ago she’d agreed with him? Did she still?

Yesterday’s shopping trip with Saffron might have well been the first indication. With no present in the stack for her cotton candy prince, JaeJoong, it had produced nothing. Scouring store after store, her frustration level rising, she’d finally given up. Junsu’s small box,

containing the statue of a young woman playing the violin had been selected as a reminder of the importance of their longtime friendship and how they'd met. After wrapping it and placing it with the other's, she'd felt a grip of remorse, a sadness of sorts that quite possibly in the coming days she would finally lose him.

Stepping away toward the closet, she reached for the broom and dustpan to clean up the glass. She was nearly done. The star on top . . . a sprinkle of fake snow . . . and the small café would finally be festive again. When they re-opened the day after Christmas it would be a warm and cozy refuge for the elite of S. Korea. A place to come relax, savor Saffron's amazing cookies and reminisce over their past holidays with Uncle. Shivering, she suddenly felt much like an outsider, looking in.

The warmth of fur against her leg startled her, nearly causing the glass pieces to slip out of the dustpan yet again. "AH. Stupid cat!" It was indeed the she-devil herself. Bending slowly she noticed the black back curl lovingly into her shin, the satisfied sound of purring floating to her ears. *Was the damned thing sucking up to her? After all this time, 'now' it wanted to be friends?*

"Heyyy . . . what's up with you anyway?" Stroking her hesitantly, she followed the quivering acceptance up to the tip of a long, furry tail. "You lonely too? Need some company?" More purring, followed by a meow of appreciation told her she might possibly have to acquiesce her hatred for the sassy feline, giving her a small window of forgiveness. "Yeahhhh, me too. Its' Christmas Eve you know. Are you hungry? How 'bout I get you a snack? I've got a meal to fix anyhow."

Giving in to the moment, Saffire scooped the cat into her arms, noticing how she leaned comfortably against her chest when she moved toward the kitchen, dumping the contents of the dustpan in the trash on her way through. "Are you finally going to call a truce?" she asked, nuzzling her nose against the softness of fur. "God knows, you've 'caused enough trouble up till now."

More purring, and Saffire was re-assured the animal was ready to call it quits and relax into companionship.

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6:45 P.M.

L OUD rapping on the wooden café door, jolted Saffire into a flurry of action. He was so late. She'd said 6:00, but why was she surprised? He always ran over. This was indeed a rare occasion. Dinner wasn't exactly her specialty, especially considering (even after weeks of familiarity) Maud's kitchen was still out of her comfort zone. A tad regretful she hadn't agreed to dine with Saffron and mother, the memory of JeJu's 'family' holiday dinner burned a distasteful image in her mind that couldn't be shaken. No, she and father, alone . . . here, amongst the trappings of a cozy Christmas atmosphere, would suffice.

Primping hurriedly in the reflection of the large coffee bar mirror she smoothed down a few stray hair, knowing Father always liked it straight and natural, unlike Mother who preferred it in a sleek, stylish up-do, corporate (of course).

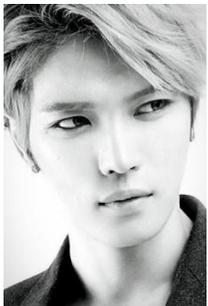
“Well, here we go girl.” Encouraging herself one last time, she smiled at the reflection, putting on a happy face for the man she would see one last time before he returned to America.

Flinging the door wide, to the dimness of early evening, the scattering of large wet snowflakes followed a gust of wind through the opening as the tall, hunched over figure stepped inside, shaking damp droplets off of his jacket and hair.

Trying not to look too startled, her fingers gripped the knob, looking squarely into the face of a grinning Kim JaeJoong.



“JJ? Oh my God. What are you doing here? I thought you said you'd be with your family tonight.”



Cocking his head sheepishly he took in the innocence of her beauty in the dim candlelit hallway. She was stunning as always, blue eyes radiant, flawless skin, touchable hair, and kissable lips. He wanted to crush her to his chest, confess his undying devotion and get on with the night. But, the hesitation in her surprise forced his anxious arms back down to each side. The look of astonishment in her eyes (as keen as the moment they locked with his) told him, she might well have been expecting someone else.

“Aishhh Princess. A man can only take so much. It's a zoo over there. Besides, I was headed past the drinking tent, and caught myself driving straight up to the café. Hope I'm not intruding.”

He was rambling. Knowing darn well the entire explanation was a complete and utter lie. That he had planned every second of it down to the precise moment she would open the door.

And, why the romantic atmosphere, fancy clothes, and smell of a tasty dinner wafting through the cozy space, already working its magic on his insides?

Stomping the snow off his feet, attempting to appear calm, cool and collected, the reality was, he was scared to death not knowing if she would accept him or not.

Blinking, he swallowed nervously leaning his head around the corner toward the dining room, noticing the decorated Christmas tree, presents, and soft music, finally resting on the candle-lit table set for two, donned in fancy white linens, sparkling wine glasses, and finely polished silver.

True, he'd come unannounced but, she'd given no indication in her text messages that she was hosting a personal dinner this evening. Holy shit! Was he too late? Was all of this for Junsu? Had he literally just stepped into the lion's den armed only with himself, a small gift and his anxious heart? Should he run or stay and fight?

It seemed like a wall had risen between them over the events of the last week, their phone and text conversations inconsequential and one-sided. If he couldn't get them back to the ease they shared 'before' JeJu, he was doomed. He wasn't a quitter and this could be his last chance to sweep her off her feet and bury Junsu once and for all.

"Here." The small package wrapped in glistening red Christmas paper was awkward in his hand as he held it out like a child giving a precious gift to a loved one. "This is for you. Merry Christmas."

"JJjjjj . . ." Cooing at the thoughtfulness of his unexpected visit, including a gift, Saffire snatched it eagerly, ushering him fully into the café lunch room. "I, I uh . . . I don't know what to say." *Polite. Why was she being so reserved?* "This is so nice of you but, I already have JaeBear." *Yes, the poor one-armed bear, damaged for life, stuffed in the bottom of the clothes closet.*

"Hmmm, de." His insides churning in anticipation, JJ bit his tongue anxious make it past the pleasantries and get to the meat of his visit. "How is my big furry partner in crime anyway? He

gets to see you every day. I'm jealous." Weaseling his way between her and the wall, he leaned back, arms folded, now certain he was interrupting something special.

"The place looks great. Expecting someone? Or are you and Saffron celebrating Christmas tonight?" Fishing for information he wondered if she would tell him if indeed it 'was' about Junsu. Seeing her concerned expression as she checked the entryway clock, her answer flooded his heart with relief and happiness.

"Yes, and no. Tomorrow we'll celebrate but, tonight my father's supposed to be here, and he's really late. I hope nothing's happened."

Concerned for his welfare, Saffire clung to the small package, unable to help noticing JJ's long sigh and broad smile after hearing her announce it was her father coming for dinner and not someone else . . . someone by the name of Kim Junsu. *Whatever these two had going on to win her affection was beginning to work, spinning it's magic whether they were present in the flesh or not.*

Finally able to relax, JJ slipped off his shoes, kicking them aside casually, stepping up to rest his palms against both her warm shoulders. Kneading her taught neck muscles with his thumbs he took the liberty to lean in, whispering well-needed reassurance in her ear.

"Aishhh, baby. I'm sure he's fine. You know us guys. Always running behind for some reason or another. You've called him haven't you?"

"Several times. Keeps going to voicemail."

Standing locked in the moment, not having seen him since her flight from the Toscana, the gentleness of his touch aroused her, making her hate that in a few short minutes from now, her father would most likely burst through the door and this cocoon of intimacy would be broken.

"Welll, keep trying. It's snowing again, and it IS Christmas Eve. He's probably stuck sitting in traffic with last minute shoppers." Holding back the urge to swivel her around and kiss her rosy lips JJ coaxed her toward the meticulously set table instead, persuading her into the stiff wooden chair. "I'll take this . . ." Plucking the package from her fingers he nodded patiently, adding, "and, you call."

Giving in to his sudden, commanding presence, Saffire pulled out her cell and punched the contact hurriedly, tapping her foot against the table leg in anticipation. Voicemail yet again.

Slamming the phone on the table, her lips pursed in annoyance, at the uncertainty of being worried, angry or both.

He was so unpredictable. But, also known for wallowing in the attention of friends and family during the holidays that were usually his forte. Now, after days of introspection, she understood why. *So where was he tonight? He knew this had been special to her. Was it because he no longer considered her 'real' family?*

Not wanting to entertain his reasoning, she shut off the voices in her head, hearing the loud buzzing of the call came through in the silence of her anticipation.

“Daddy? . . . Is that you? Where the hell are you? I’ve been waiting. The food’s getting cold.” Her voice whining and strained she knew by the hesitation, he wasn’t coming.

Unwilling to admit he’d probably screwed things up again, Kyong cursed inwardly in the silence, before blurting out, “Oh my God Saffire. I’m so sorry,” hastily rushing through the excuse, hoping (as usual) she would understand. “I’m at the airport right now. I can’t make it honey. It’s vital I get back to the States by day after tomorrow for a meeting with some new investors. If I don’t, I’ll miss this opportunity, and you know better than anyone, it helps pay the bills. I’ll make it up to you I promise. I thought I could wait and go in the morning but, that just doesn’t give me enough time.”

Across from her, JJ cringed, seeing her demeanor change from excitement to disappointment in the split second it took for the situation to apparently resolved itself.

“Whatever. I get it.”

So it wasn’t about her parentage after all. Relieved at least at that, rolling her eyes upward, she bit her lower lip, accepting the fact that no matter how much she loved this man, he would always be the same. *Why would she expect him to be any different? Even after the heart rendering confessions of the last few days. Maybe if Saffron understood this Kyong Ryu better, she wouldn’t mourn his absence in her life so much.*

“Love you little girl. Have a great day with your sister tomorrow. I’ll catch up when I get settled, okay? Merry Christmas.” The lightheartedness of his closing almost annoyed her more than anything. *So, fuck him. She had JJ here. JJ and a delicious candlelit dinner for two. It was*

as if Karma had swooped down in the form of a mysterious black cat, and served up the perfect scenario for romance.

“Yeah. Same to you. Bye.” Her back prickling with disappointment, none-the-less she smiled into JJ’s quizzical face motioning him to sit. “Guess that means I’m all alone tonight. Hungry? Wanna stay and eat?”

Trying to seem nonchalant as he accepted the invitation, JJ folded his hands on the white cotton tablecloth sensing her cyclone of emotions. “De, I’d love to Princess.” *Surely she didn’t think he would decline. She needed him now more than ever.*

“Good. Then dinner for two it is. It’s nothing fancy, just a typical American Christmas dinner. Ham, potatoes, green beans and some other random stuff. You okay with that?” Pushing down the parting words of her father, she tried to sound glib, hoping she could salvage the remainder of the evening with the eager and willing Cotton Candy Prince, Kim JaeJoong.

But, why was the air around them so electrified with unanswered questions, emotions, and expectations? There was that word again . . . expectations. What was ‘he’ expecting tonight, along with dinner? Grace, forgiveness? She’d already given him that over the phone. A commitment maybe? Was he really here to check up on her and stake his claim because he knew Junsu was out of town? Honestly . . . did she care? She was alone, and he was here.

Clutching the hem of her skirt under the table she tried to focus on what was important right in the moment. Eating and getting through dinner without falling apart, or giving him any indication that half of her was ‘all in’, and the other half . . . somewhere between crawling out of Junsu’s bed last Saturday night and the realization that her feelings were more fragmented than she’d thought.

“You really did do an amazing job in here. I should hire you to do my house.” Chuckling, JJ dragged his eyes away from the curve of her breast in the tightly fitting blouse, finally taking in the entire room, seeing the difference her artistic eye had made from previous years.

Uncle’s hand at decorating the tree had always been a combination of cute and quirky, with lots of large, old lights winding precariously around each branch like a brightly colorful snake. Saffire’s store-window creation boasted an array of white twinkling lights meticulously woven in and out, large red and white bows, golden beads, and the large star to top it all off. As

gorgeous as it was, he missed Uncle's just the same, along with its familiarity, and the genuine love he knew came with it.

"Thanks." Suddenly bashful at the compliment, Saffire studied him intently noticing the quirk of a sad smile and the way his eyes twinkled nearly able to see the memories of his past holidays in the café coming alive through his expressions. "I wasn't going to go to so much trouble, but . . ." Her voice waning, she coughed slightly unable to stop herself from touching his wrist gently, her fingers curling around the warmth, hoping to sooth the evidence of pain. "I couldn't leave it so stark and vacant. I did it for him. And, for Saffron and I. Considering we're used to big gaudy holidays, we're kind of alone here you know."

JJ turned appreciatively. Just another reason why he cared for her so much. In the throes of her own personal family drama, she was still sympathetic and warm to 'his' feelings. Not wanting to let his own emptiness at Uncle's passing spoil the remainder of the night he reassured her quickly.

"YAH! Princess. You've got me don't you? And, everyone else that loves it here. In fact, this was always the BEST damn place to be at Christmastime. Young Jae made sure of it. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. Gamza (THANKS)." Pulling her hand up, his lips touched her knuckles delicately feeling them burn against her cool flesh. Lost in the blue pools of her eyes he pulled away, clearing his throat, his demeanor changing swiftly.

"Open your present before we eat." Taking one finger he pushed the small gift across the table.

Releasing her hand from his grasp shyly, she accepted the invitation, tugging gently on the massive bow perched atop the perfectly wrapped box. "Did you do this?" Giggling she wiggled the strand of ribbon in his face playfully. "It's very professional."

"Hell no. It'd be in a paper bag if I had to do it." Laughing in spite of his nervousness he motioned her to hurry. "Come on, it's just paper, don't be so picky."

"Okay, okay, I don't wanna rip it. It's so pretty." Admiring the printed red foil as it parted, and the box top disappeared, pulling the small snow globe from its styrofoam resting place, she was awed by the intricate crystal replica of a snowflake nestled in the center. Shaking it gingerly, the fake snow fluttered around dreamily reminding her of the



fact that along with Kim JaeJoong, came the wonders of a new fallen snow.

“Do you like it? Sort of fits us don’t you think?” Anxious for a verbal reaction, JJ leaned over forcing her to turn it upside down, where a small knob turned it into a music box. “Turn it on. It plays ‘Let It Snow’.”

The tinkle of the familiar winter Christmas song soothed her worn and battered faith in relationships. He was touching her soul and in the simplicity of a snow globe she began to understand his intentions and his heart.

“Thank you. It’s beautiful. I love it . . . you’ll never know how much.” Claspng it to her chest, still playing quietly against her she smiled over the flicker of candlelight.

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A CROSS the table JJ saw his window of opportunity in the way she caressed the snowy orb longingly. Recalling how it had caught his eye in the window of the gift shop, all he could wish for was that she would forever be reminded that he’d first touched her heart on a snowy trek from the drinking tent to this very café. He was indeed falling. Now encased in a comfortable bubble of contentment, he broke the silence, his previous awkwardness having given way to a lazy confidence.

“Where’s Saffron tonight anyway? With Joong?”

The simple question, laced with innuendoes alerted Saffire to the inevitable. He was making sure they would stay alone and uninterrupted.

“No. Actually she’s having dinner with mother. She decided to stay the night.”

“Ah.” Tilting his head, trying not to sound concerned one way or the other, that was all it took.

“Why?” Releasing his gift back into the box, Saffire was aware that now the cat and mouse game had finally begun. Watching his eyes deepen, and hands relax against the tablecloth she was seeing him slowly calculating their time alone together.

“Ohhh, I dunno. We sort of got ‘interrupted’ last time, remember? Just trying to cover all my bases.”

“Mmmm, I DO remember. That whole kitchen thing.” Snickering under her breath, what she DID recall was the (all out) war she’d had with sister regarding her and JJ having a go at it on top of ‘her’ precious workspace, the bakery counter.

“That was a crazy night huh?”

The look of lust in his eyes was killing her. Throwing her back to the moment his lips and hands had touched her up against the kitchen wall, claiming her without question. Suddenly, (just like that night), his mere presence in the room was a force she was unable to deny.

Don't go there Saffire. Don't be that girl. Don't be mother. What has everyone said? You've only had him in your life a few weeks. You're trying to be an adult here, not some horny teenager.

But, her own conscience was falling flat against the onslaught of his undeniable sexuality. The atmosphere had flipped the moment, “Let it Snow” began to play beneath her fingers. It didn’t matter that there was dinner to think of, wine, polite conversation . . . all those things that told her she needed to spend more time getting to know him. Not one of them floated to the top above the primal greed she was experiencing as she stripped him with her eyes. *Oh she'd seen the body before, on stage, writhing and sweaty.*

“Dinner! It’s getting cold. Dammit.” Standing up she bolted toward the kitchen cussing herself out for even thinking she could be as calculating as the woman she called “mother”. To give in to him on such a guttural level after all she’d been through, was nothing short of ludicrous.

Before she ever hit the front hallway, he was behind her whispering, “Dinner can wait,” his arms curled around her quivering form, back-hugging her tightly, inhaling the sweet scent of flowers drifting from her hair.

NO . . . NO . . . NO . . . If dinner waits, I'm done for. Yelling at herself inwardly Saffire’s chest heaved in relentless submission to the low gruff command of his voice.

“All I want right now is you.”

She needed a drink first . . . she needed him to release her . . . she needed Saffron to come home . . . It was no secret, this was what she'd been after for weeks. Him . . . his love . . . so, why was she hesitating? Because, no matter how much she tried to tell herself she could keep

him at bay, down in the depths of her heart she knew it would be impossible. He was like a poison running through her veins. She was caught, trapped in his web of passion like a willing spider.

“JJ . . .” Attempting to wriggle free of his grasp, she uncurled him from around her back breathy and shaking. The excuse of dinner had already been played. “I . . . I . . .” Stuttering a non-answer she didn’t know whether to slip away from him entirely or turn and face the music.

“Princesssss . . .” Making the decision for her he spun her around his expression dark, cupping her anguished face between the palms of his hands. With only inches between them her knees weak and unforgiving, she was certain she was about to faint. Forcing her subconscious to focus all she could do was stare into the deepness of his eyes, knowing that she wanted to kiss him, but she wanted it far too much. Every muscle in her body taut and tingling before she could protest anymore his lips began to move, lightly touching the indentation between her eyebrows, on down to one crimson cheek, over to the other and ending up at the tip of her nose.

With the still tinkling sounds of, “Let It Snow” coming from the table, the backdrop of romance became the backdrop of passion. The flag had fallen . . . the race was on, and she was the first horse out of the gate.

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SAFFIRE had never felt so desired. Languishing in the aftermath of lovemaking, she wanted desperately to scold herself for giving in but, found it impossible. Her senses keen and on fire had given in to JJ’s every whim. He had been ‘all’ and yet ‘nothing’ like she’d imagined. A sweet, considerate lover he had still taken her to heights neither of them had expected.



Listening to his light snoring beside her in the dark bedroom she smiled, fascinated. Grateful that for once Saffron had been true to her word and stayed away. Rising she slipped the coverlet up over her nakedness, cupping both knees, taking mental pictures of his vulnerability. This was the JaeJoong he wanted to be. Not the Idol everyone worshipped. Just a man . . . being with the woman he loved.

Yes . . . she was that woman. His confession still fresh in her ears, as much as she'd waited for it, it couldn't have come at a worse time. Reaching out timidly, caressing a stray strand of hair out of his eyes, she wondered what the forthcoming Christmas day would bring now. She hadn't even bought him a gift.

“Mmmm.” Moaning against her he stirred, swatting his forehead as if a bug had settled there instead of a loving touch.

“Shhhh. Go back to sleep.” Knowing it was the wee hours of the morning she quietly urged him to disregard the interruption and continue his dreaming, whatever it had been about.

“What time is it?” Peering up at her through tired eyes, he licked his dry lips.

“Middle of the night.” Unwilling to forego her position of authority she leaned down, kissing the top of his disheveled hair lightly, uttering, “Don't mind me.”

“Mmmm, you say that now.” Teasing, even in a sleepy stupor his head flipped back capturing her mouth while savoring the divine taste of her smooth salty lips, reminiscent of their prolonged connection just hours earlier.

Taken by surprise her body flung out over the quilt, crushing her breasts against his bare chest, as she felt his hands creep up and grab the soft exposed skin of her behind. Coming to life, he laughed through the passionate kiss tumbling her across the cold hard floor, poking, prodding and tickling her until spent and out of breath he released her to a well-deserved potty break, playfully swatting her as she tripped away.

“Now how am I supposed to go back to sleep? Do you see this?” His mocking voice reverberating through the small room, he pointed at his crotch, hard evidence she had aroused him significantly in one innocent act of touching.

“Not my problemmm . . .” Giggling from atop the toilet she flushed standing only to catch a glimpse of herself in the tiny cracked mirror over the sink. *Why did she look and feel so different? Was this what being in love truly felt like? She had to admit, up until now she'd been clueless, because if it was . . . she never wanted to experience it any other way.*

“It IS your problem. Come here Princess. We're not finished yet.”

“Yes. We are.” Plunking down beside him, she tossed the quilt over her head, covering every inch of herself, revealing only a waif-like face and white knuckles.

“Aishhh, I don’t think so.” Stretched out in front of her, feet crossed, hands behind his head JJ’s well-endowed, naked body glistened in the moonlight filtering through the bedroom window.

How was he so comfortable in his own skin? It was sort of unnerving. Without moving a muscle he was seducing her (yet again) with nothing more than his presence in the room.

Under the confines of the thick blanket, she squeezed the hem unconsciously, feeling her womanhood tighten with anticipation, tiny beads of perspiration popping up around her hairline.

“Please don’t do this to me JJ.” Begging him was her only recourse.

“Do what?” Gauging his head slightly in her direction, only his eyes shifted as he rolled them back, interlocking with hers.

“That . . . lay there like that. It’s not fair.”

“Sure it is.”

Then, nothing. Not another word, not another move. He was killing her for the umpteenth time that night. He might as well have been standing over her with a knife, stabbing her slowly and watching her bleed out.



In silence, he laid prone, cooling his hot skin against the wooden floor. He knew exactly what he was doing. He was reeling her in. The first time had been magic . . . initiated by a pent-up desire to seek each other out sexually, discovering what the hype was all about. Now that the cat was out of the bag, he wanted to see if she would come to him, of her own free will. Whether meaning to or not, she’d woken him, and by the look of her countenance, she knew it only too well.

The best part of the night . . . confessing had given him wings . . . finally able to admit his love for her emotionally and physically. Now, they ‘both’ needed to acknowledge it. Not skim over it like a dirty deed to brush under the rug. He was more than ready and willing to claim her to the world. But, was she?

“Coming?”

That one word coupled with the crook of his index finger coaxed her from beneath her fabricated tent of shame. Forced to confront her weaknesses like never before, she stood over him greedily, biting the tip of her thumbnail for support.

“That’s my girl.”

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