

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

(Part 3)

“The stockings aren’t the ONLY things HUNG this year . . .”



Thursday, December 25th, 2014

Gangnam, S. Korea – Cup of Hotness Café

7:50 P.M.

STANDING motionless, arms crossed Junsu examined Saffire’s animated face, flushed cheeks and twinkling eyes. His heart left somewhere between the sidewalk and the mailbox pulsated as it died a slow torturous death, the still cold air penetrating through his skin like liquid silver. He was living out the lyrics to every desperate love song ever written.

Backing up a step, chest heaving, her look resembled the heroine in a horror movie, who’d come face-to-face with an unexpected demon. Animation giving way to horror, her twinkling eyes blinked rapidly in shock, a million and one thoughts crossing her mind, giving none of them credence by speaking.



Without a sound, the heartbroken Junsu reached out picking the unopened envelope from her grasp. Untying the silk ribbon in one fell swoop, he slipped the silver ring into the palm of his hand before releasing it to the confines of his coat pocket. The love and care with which he'd picked it out, tossed down into the darkness alongside it.

“I . . . I . . . Oh God, Junsuu . . .” Stuttering in an attempt to explain (without much luck) she clutched the lapel of his jacket, her nails scraping against the cold leather.

“Don't. Please, just don't.” He had been humiliated enough. Pushing her hands away he held out the envelope, “Merry Christmas Fire. Take this and be happy,” before bending forward, his soft lips caressing her cold sweaty forehead. “You deserve it.”

“But . . . wait . . . you don't understand.”

Stepping away, his shoulder brushed against her in passing, kicking the snow proposal into a maze of undecipherable streaks, striding off toward the end of the block (hearing nothing but the echo of her voice behind him).

“Your present . . .” she whispered her voice dying slowly.

Swiveling, she watched him through misty eyes, sadness hanging in the air around her. *What had she done? This amazing man, her confidant and friend, who'd stuck by her through her darkest hours was walking out of her life for good. And, there was no way to stop him. No way to race after his retreating figure, convincing him she cared. Nothing she could ever do would change the outcome of what had just transpired.*

Then, before he even reached the corner (like rubbing salt in an already bleeding wound) JJ's black SUV skidded to a stop at the intersection, pulling slowly toward the curb.

Witnessing his arrival, the dejected Junsu remained steady none-the-less, head not wavering, eyes focused on the street ahead. It would serve no purpose for either of them to release his anger on the man who'd been like a brother to him for years. No matter how it seemed, it wasn't his fault the Christmas day that started out being one of the best days of his life now (along with his heart) laid crumpled, in the snow beneath his feet.

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JUMPING from the confines of the toasty car, JJ slid precariously across the snow covered sidewalk, curiosity rushing to the forefront of his consciousness. *Was that Junsu headed down the street? Where was his car? And, why was Saffire standing jacketless in the cold, looking like she'd just seen a ghost? Whatever happened he'd obviously missed it. Had they argued? Noooo . . . Junsu wasn't the arguing kind when it came to his women. Maybe she'd finally told him.*

Approaching with determination his strong, protective arm enveloped her stiff back, urging her gently toward the front step. "Princess, what are you doing? It's freezing out here. Let's go inside before you catch cold."

"It's over Jae. He knows." Her voice mournful, Saffire allowed him to maneuver her forward in the direction of the café like a robot, still craning her neck in hopes Junsu would change his mind and return so she could explain properly. Sadly, she knew he wouldn't.

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Hyun Joong's cabin in the woods

CHECKING on the meal, Hyun Joong scolded himself for being impatient, "Not one of your shining moments today Joong," Draining the beer he'd opened after cleaning the fish and taking a shower he'd had high hopes for today, wanting to share one of his favorite hobbies with the woman he loved.

Everything had been great until (in the heat of the moment) the dreaded words spilled out, erecting a wall between them thicker than the 'Great Wall of China'. He'd spoken them and now he couldn't and wouldn't, take them back.

Glancing at the landing he imagined her in the tub, bubbles up to her neck. Shaking off the idea of storming up the stairs and joining her, he dumped his empty bottle in the recycling, reaching for another to take its place. Until they could come to some sort of an understanding he'd have to check his lust. Muddying the waters with sex was never a good idea. No matter how pissed she might be about the afternoon, as far as he was concerned, it was time to move their relationship forward.



Longing for the memory of their first Christmas together to be a good one, he regarded the twinkling tree lights. Today would have to sustain her for the entire term of his military service. It was disconcerting not knowing if he would be able to see her alone, even during his leave. Did he have the right to ask her to keep him in her heart? Was the last few weeks enough to withstand the separation they would have to endure? Thinking he'd made his feelings clear at JeJu, (despite not saying the words), why did he know her inevitable reaction would be similar to today?

Clutching at his chest, the vivacity in her eyes at seeing him this morning popped into his head. Waking with her next to him every day would make his world complete. The hint of a smile about his lips, he saluted the absentee Uncle Ryu for choosing him to be with his niece.

“Don't worry Uncle this is only a minor setback. I may have lost the battle but, I'm sure I'll win the war.”

His eyes flickering with a sudden exasperation at the thoughts circling back to the silence of the afternoon, broken by Saffron's squeals when another trout flopped helplessly out over the ice. Secretly he admired the haunting grace she exhibited, shutting down his every attempt to smooth her ruffled feathers. Releasing the fish she'd caught, he'd offered to re-bait the hook but, she'd politely refused, proving she didn't need him.

An easy woman she wasn't. Finishing his second beer, he shook his head, perplexed. *So, why was he happy to hear the soft thud of her slippers on the stairs, announcing her arrival?*

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DINNER was a mixture of small talk and drinking, devised to help get them thru the meal. Both danced around the real issue, attempting to regain the easy camaraderie they had experienced earlier. Putting her wine glass down, in unison with Joong setting his beer above his dish they locked eyes, Saffron clearing her throat nervously before being the first to speak.

“Ach hem. SO, about this afternoon . . .” Patting her lips with the napkin, she placed it (still neatly folded) beside her plate.

Interrupting her, his tone was firm. “Saffron, please. I don't want this to become a huge deal. I said what I said and I meant it. I'm in love with you.” Leaning back a line appeared between his scrunched brows. “If you don't feel the same, we'll just leave and go back to the city. I think I told you once before. I'm not into being your boy toy.”

“Boy Toy?” Stunned she met his determined eyes. *What the hell. Was he really drawing the line?* No groveling, not even an apology. Hell no, he’d just put all his cards on the table, obviously it meant . . . all or nothing. “Really Joong you’re getting almost as dramatic as my sister.” (Although she liked the notion of lashing him to the bed, naked and blindfolded while she did unspeakable things to him.)

Leaning one elbow on the table he gave her a half-smile, “Now you’re trying to distract me. Get those nasty thoughts out of your dirty mind and answer me seriously. I don’t need a reason or a speech, ‘yes’ or ‘no’ will do. I can wait for the rest.”

Smirking at his expression, never-the-less she couldn’t imagine life without him. As the seconds ticked by she finally rose, guzzling the wine to calm her nerves, analyzing her heart as she paced the length of the table. Truth was, she really did want to take a leap of faith. If she stayed, he expected her heart and soul, if not, it would most assuredly throw her into a pit of despair.

Halting in front of him, her eyes raked up and down his body, silently listing to all the reasons why it was a bad idea. Accepting the inescapable truth she gave in, setting her empty goblet across from his plate. It was time to stop overthinking and admit she loved him.

“Yes.”

Her response so low and barely audible he squinted, rising to his feet, leaning into her face, one ear cocked.

“What? I didn’t quite hear you.”

Sighing at his quirky sense of humor, she pinched his ear lobe, “You heard me perfectly. I said YES.”

“Ouch,” Rubbing his ear, he kissed her soundly with the realization the war was all ‘but’ won.

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WITH the dinner dishes done, Saffron stood in front of the wooden coffee table gazing at the dying fire. Hearing the fridge open and slam shut, she blushed when his arm swept around her small waist back-hugging her, his lips pressing into the red hair at her neck.

Smelling deliciously of a combination consisting of shampoo, the smoky fire and spices from dinner he relinquished his drink gesturing for her to get comfortable while he proceeded to the log rack.

“The day’s been perfect, yah?”

“It has. Fishing together was fun.” Appreciative she tucked her stocking feet under the long A-line skirt adding, “Even though we could’ve melted the damned pond with your competitive heated stares. You’re so ‘relentless’.”

“Wae (WHY)?” Cradling the log in his arms he glanced back at her smug appearance. “I’m sure I don’t know WHAT you’re talking about. You were the one squawking like a bird, and scaring all the fish away.” Grinning at her childish tongue stuck out, he lazily stirred the burning embers placing another log on top.

Licking her lips, Saffron admired the muscular lines of his body as the fire crackled up into an orange and yellow flame. Amazingly, it was hard to believe she’d set out to find one man and ended up discovering the ‘perfect’ man. Correcting herself quickly, no . . . the reality was he was the ‘right’ man. He was so different from American men, especially Ian. He was quick-witted, intelligent and a genuinely loving person. *So why was she hesitating?*

“Joong, can I ask you a question?” Admittedly, something had been bothering her ever since discovering Uncle Ryu was really her father.

“Mmm-huh, anything.” Clearing his throat he picked up his beer, figuring it must be important. From the looks of things, she’d obviously hit her limit for alcohol. Yearning to sweep her off the couch, climb the stairs to the bedroom and ravish her as if she were the heroine of a trashy novel. With her mood changing like a light switch he waited instead.

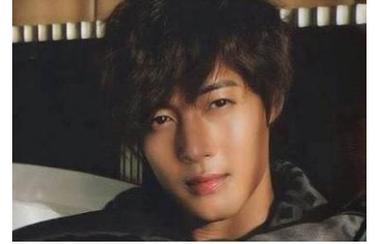
Struggling how to form the question without sounding silly or crazy, Saffron pressed deeper into the plush cushions.

“Are you sure we met by fate? Or did Uncle have more to do with it than we all thought?” *Had it really been a coincidence or did he and JJ have prior knowledge of the relationship between Uncle, Saffire and herself?*

“Ummm, I’m not sure what you mean.” Crossing one leg over the other, Hyun Joong scrutinized her curiously.

“Welll, after I was dumped by Ian, Uncle pleaded with me to come to Korea to meet someone. He said he had important news to discuss. Now, I know it had to do with the Café and of course, Saffire. Were you by any chance the ‘someone’ he was talking about?”

“Maybe . . . he never mentioned having nieces, even though he was my mentor, and we were close.” Shrugging his shoulders Joong recalled his conversation with the spirit at JeJu, who stated he couldn’t read the future and if he’d known about the cancer earlier, he would’ve put his plan in motion. Now Saffron was curious if he had been privy to it or not. “Are you implying your Uncle was match-making?”



“Exactly. There are a few things you don’t know. Let me tell you what happened after last weekend.”

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TIME wore on, the fire was getting cold and the last of Hyun Joong’s beer warm as Saffron methodically related everything from finding out Young Jae was her father, to the love triangle between Mother and the two brothers.

Processing the mountain of information, Joong rose to stoke the fire, finding it hard to believe Young Jae’s past had been so tragic. Now the deceased spirit’s bedside speech made a lot more sense.

“Damnnn, that’s a lot of shit to process Oh Hani.” Meeting Saffron’s concerned face, he desperately wanted to relate his own unearthly experience. However, this wasn’t the time. It was obvious she was still confused. And, (like it or not), Saffire needed to be there when he told her what had happened that night.

“Joong? You had no idea about any of this? Nothing about a hidden dining room or mystery woman?” Sighing, she set the empty glass on the table, whatever buzz she’d sported long since gone. A weight lifting from her shoulders, she was relieved he wasn’t connected to father’s plan.

“Ani, we did drink together one night after JJ had been dumped though and he told us the story about why he built the dining room.”



Sitting there beside her, why hadn't he noticed the resemblance? Not so much in looks, more in mannerisms. The way she held chopsticks, the crinkle of her eyes when she laughed. And, like now, the tilt of her head as she listened to him intently.

“Aishh, now that I think about it. It had to be your mother he was talking about. Sounds pretty close to what you told me. It's hard to believe how misunderstandings and lies have affected your family.” Instinctively he drew her into his arms hating she was hurting. “How are you holding up?”

The shadow of a smile crossed her face, “I had a long talk with Mother and I don't agree with what she did but, I've sort of come to terms with it all. My 'so-called' father. Well, Kyong is another story entirely.”

“Hmmm and his sisters?” The top of her head tucked under his chin, his thumb caressed her waist.

“Pffft . . .” she scoffed, “you're talking to Saffron Ryu. I've brought down scarier people than my two loving Aunts, that's for sure.”

Kissing her cheek, he hugged her tightly, “That's my sassy Debutante. Don't forget, I'm here if you need me.”

Peering into his brown eyes, she palmed his face leaning away. “I know, and thank you.” Suddenly feeling closer to him her fingers caressed his smooth cheeks announcing in surprise, “OH. You shaved.”

“De, I was in a hurry this morning.”

“Wished you'd waited.” Scolding him she frowned. “I like watching you shave. Mmmm, your hair all wet from the shower . . . no shirt on. Sooo yummy. Shit, I could sell tickets you know. Get rich off your naked chest.”

Chuckling when she climbed into his lap, Joong grabbed her roaming hands playfully able to read her like a book. “Whoah there. We're not done yet. It's my turn to talk. I have important news.”

“Important news huh?” Somehow she knew it was about the bitchy ex. “Wait, I think I’m gonna need more wine for this.” Pushing off his broad shoulders she tried to rise, grunting when he gripped her middle, forcing her to stay put.

“Ani, no more for you. Don’t wanna be scraping you off my bathroom floor . . . again.”

“Come on then say your peace.” Preparing herself for the latest Chung A crisis, clearly the situation with the ex, still wasn’t cleared up.

Twisting a lock of her hair, Joong hesitated, trying to choose his words carefully.

“Shit, I knew it. It IS about Chung A, huh?”

“De . . .”

“Oh my God, she’s freaking pregnant . . .” Rearing away from him, dread washed over her at the exhausting thought of having to deal with the insane woman even another second. *Now, how would a child coming into the picture affect their already unconventional relationship?*

“Saffron stop jumping to conclusions and listen.” His tone somber, Joong gripped her by the arms, tugging her forward.

Bristling at his touch, the color drained from her face. Knowing it was petty and wrong, (in her defense) she was an only child and the idea of sharing was foreign to her.

“I was meeting Chung A at her apartment to make sure she kept her appointment at the hospital when a Detective stopped me inside the building. Apparently, she and her pregnant roommate have been under investigation for scamming a celebrity in Japan.”

“So, she’s NOT pregnant?” Squealing, the line disappeared between her brows, her face lighting up in excitement.

“Ani . . .” The set of his shoulders eluded to the relief he’d felt upon finding this information out. After all that, it amazed him how the only thing she’d managed to pick up on was Chung A ‘wasn’t’ having his baby.

“So she never had any proof of the pregnancy after all?” Drawing herself closer, Saffron’s curiosity was peaked.

“Ani, the Detective found a used test in the bathroom that her roommate confessed was hers. Chung A was going show it to me and use it as proof.” Cringing at his own words, he still felt foolish, even after being informed about all the lies that had been turned up during the investigation.

“I knew it . . . The little bitch. I KNEW she was lying.” Elated she’d been right all along, Saffron bounced on his lap, striking him gleefully about the chest with her fists.

“Shame on you,” he scolded jokingly. “I think you’re enjoying the misery of someone down on her luck a little too much.” *Granted Chung A wasn’t the best person in the world but still . . . they had been involved.*

“Sorry Joong (not really). So, obviously she pulled the same scam in Japan, right?” Asking meekly she plucked randomly at the buttons on his shirt. Chung A had treated her as if ‘she’ was the home wrecker.

“De, only the roommate was the one involved with the Japanese artist.” His answer short and curt, it was a fact . . . in the last week he’d done a lot of soul searching, angry at himself for being duped.

Sensing his rising frustration, Saffron wondered how he could talk about it so lightly. Funny, but the Baek Seung Jo side of him would’ve kicked her to the curb a long time ago, no questions asked. Unable to forget the conversation she’d overheard in JeJu between him and Chung A, she had obviously manipulated him into spending lots of precious time and money. Sooo, that being said . . . exactly how deep into his pockets had she gotten?

“Joong you gave her cash didn’t you?” Shoving his chest slightly, it was clear by his body language Saffron had hit a nerve. “Oh shit. No fucking way . . . it was hush money huh?” Now truly indignant, she hurled herself off his lap, plunking down beside him on the couch.

“Stop it, I’m responsible.” Brushing her skirt aside, he rose for another drink. *This wasn’t how telling her was supposed to go.*

“Pffft . . . is she a ten-year old? Why would you need to take responsibility of a grown-ass woman?” Something else was becoming clearer to her, (enter the green-eyed monster). Narrowing her eyes now she understood why he looked wretched picking her up today. Jumping up she paced angrily stopping only when he appeared coming back into the living room so enraged, a knot

formed in her throat as she spoke. “Damn, you’ve been with her this whole time . . . she’s why you haven’t called me isn’t it?”

Taking a deep breath he popped the cap off the beer drinking half of it before answering. “Saffron, I hate to say this but, sometimes you really ARE cold-hearted. The members of my dance team are family to me no matter what. How in God’s name could I walk away and still consider myself a man?”

Glaring at each other, Saffron choked out a short laugh the tears welling up in her eyes at his words. Her cold? HELL NO. She was a realist. The word ‘Family’ was a stab to her heart. Envied for growing up spoiled and rich, (even before working for one of the top company’s in the country), no one bothered looking beyond her privileged life to see the unloved, pudgy girl growing up in the shadow of her socialite mother.

On the wall of the apartment above the Cafe, she could visualize the picture of her mother in the middle of the brothers, each holding an infant. Those people were her family . . . connected by blood. In her world there was no choice.

Listening to him, clearly family meant something different in his culture. It was part of his makeup. That kind of relationship was something she’d had for a month every summer with her ‘real’ father, Young Jae.

Dropping her arms, the tears fell. “It’s hard to believe you would protect her after what she’s done to you.”

Astonished, the last thing he expected were tears. Gathering her against him the wounds of her past cut deep. Desiring to reassure her, he raked the hair behind her ears, pressing his lips to her forehead tenderly.

“I can’t give you details, but trust me Babe, as of yesterday, she’s history. I know it was stupid to give her money, and ani, I haven’t been with her in any other way. I would NEVER hurt you like that, not ever!”

Seeing the truth in his eyes, she pressed her cheek to the warm skin of his chest as he stroked her hair. *Did he realize how fragile her heart was?* Her trust in him was already being tested. If she compared him with the other men in her life, they were lacking. Ian in faithfulness, her father’s selfishness and in the end . . . even her loving Uncle’s inability to be honest.

The Christmas lights illuminated the couple locked in a tight embrace trying to understand the emotions of love. For Saffron this was new territory, for Hyun Joong it was reminiscent of another woman with trust issues. Resting his chin on top of her head, he finally felt her relax,.

“Better? Let’s forget about all that now. I got you a Christmas gift. And, by the way, did I tell you how ravishing you look tonight?”

Beaming she wiped at her tears. “Okay, yes you always know the right thing to say. And, you Hyunnie, are scrumptious enough to eat.” Using the nickname she nipped on his neck ready and willing to re-consummate their new relationship status.

Ah hell! Not surprised at her mood switching rapidly from serious to horny he reluctantly pushed her toward the sofa.

“Patience Debutante. We’ll get there, trust me. But, wait here a sec. I gotta go get your present first.” Indicating she should sit still he darted to the tree, retrieving a small box. Smiling warmly he sat back down beside her holding it in his palm like an offering. “Merry Christmas.”

Taking the brightly wrapped gift Saffron flashed him a grin. He had been sending her presents all week, from little things like text messages to complete outfits. Some would find it a desperate way to get her attention. She on the other hand, found it romantic.

“Joonnnnggg . . . it’s so pretty, I hate to open it.” Turning the box, she tugged the red ribbon ripping into the paper anyway. Gingerly lifting the lid, she gazed inside, one hand to her cheek in amazement. “Oh my God . . . it’s beautiful.”



Sparkling on a bed of deep black velvet was a small, diamond encrusted snowflake necklace. Touching it tentatively a sigh escaped her lips, “Joong, this is too much, really. I can’t accept this.”

“Sure you can. It’s perfect for you.” Disregarding her protests he took the box, releasing the necklace from it prison. “I saw it in a store window and it brought back memories of me rescuing you in the snow.” Motioning her to turn around his fingers quivered nervously as he placed the pendant directly below her collarbone whispering, “You’ve changed my life Oh Ha Ni.”

Lifting her hair, she fingered the six silver points, the relief and excitement was palpable at finding her Prince, ‘Baek Seung Jo’ on the night they met and the accompanying piggyback. Swinging around, she hugged him tight.

The loss of her prized designer shoes was nothing compared to the sparkling gems twinkling around her neck, in the glow of the Christmas lights.

“Thank you so much. I’ll treasure it forever.”

Ducking sideways to avoid his nibbling to her neck she felt like a giddy schoolgirl, “Joong, stoppp . . . Ohhh tickles. Now, YOU have to wait ‘cause I got something for you too. I had a hard time finding just the right gift.” Jumping up she searched among the countless packages spying the gold paper with a big Santa Clause sticker. “Who are all these other gifts for?” She asked, handing him the rectangle shaped box.

“Me. They’re from my fan club.” Rolling his eyes, his shoulders shrugged nonchalantly.

“Wow, I never realized . . . I mean . . . I thought they were from relatives or friends.” Scratching her head, Saffron scanned the (over twenty) packages plus stuffed animals under the tree. *What does he do with all of these? Keep them? Give them away? Will it always be like this?* Once again since meeting him, she became aware of Kim Hyun Joong, the Idol.

“Aishhh, Saffron.”

“Huh?” Wide-eyed she snapped to attention. “Sorry. Saffire was right. You really ARE popular aren’t you?”

“Does it bother you Babe?”

Puckering her forehead she clasped her hands tightly in her lap. “No, no . . . not at all.”

The hell it didn’t! If she wasn’t here would he be chest high in wrapping paper and stuffed animals, gazing longingly into the eyes of his lovesick fans. Was that where all the friendship bracelets came from he owned? And, what about the collection of skulls scattered around his apartment? How was she going to compete with that?

Kicking the closest teddy bear to her foot, one fingernail in her teeth, she smiled wanly, trying not to over-exaggerate the outcome. She was the only one here who mattered . . . it was time to move on.

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CAREFULLY unwrapping the box, his excitement was all internal. Receiving gifts was the norm for Kim Hyun Joong the Idol, however, it was a first for Joong ‘Saffron’s boyfriend’.

Folding the paper into a perfectly creased square, with plans to keep it, he knew it was silly. His crew and JJ too, would tease him incessantly if they ever found out, but it didn’t matter. Seeing the anxiety on her freckled face brought a smile to his lips. *This was so important for her.*

Peeking under the lid, he was ready for anything ‘except’ the burgundy reindeer sweater. Still he pulled it out acting surprised, “Mmmm, it’s pretty . . . thanks Babe.” *It was the ugliest mother trucking sweater he’d ever seen in his entire life!*



“Wait, wait, wait . . . there’s more,” Clapping eagerly Saffron put a fist to her lips trying to contain her excitement as he noticed another sweater identical only smaller and longer with pockets in the front.

“Agioo, couples shirts?” It took all his acting skill to keep the horror from spreading across his face. He hated the idea of couple’s anything. Deciding honesty was his best ally, she jumped up seizing the sweater dress up against her shoulders, parading it proudly in front of him.

“Isn’t this better than a silly stuffed animal? Oh my God I was having such a hard time. I wanted to get you something unique but after I saw couples in the mall wearing matching shirts like this I changed my mind.” Spinning in a circle, she met his eyes coyly. “You like it, right?”

Frowning slightly, he tried to hide his disapproval. *Did he like it? No, in fact . . . he hated it. He hated the idea of them in general. It was the wrong color and not even a style his grandfather would’ve worn. Was it unique? Hell yes. What had possessed her? She was classy, (obsessive even about her looks, all the way down to her designer shoes).*

His eyes swept her body, his clenched jaw twitching in aggravation. *Damn! No way would he ever allow her to wear that tight sweater dress in public the way it hugged her curves and barely covered her ass. She might as well be buck naked.*

Saffron sensed his distaste, immediately dropping the dress to her knees. “You hate it don’t you? Shit, I thought it was cool in Korea for couples to wear matching outfits.” Rolling it like a

discarded towel she flopped down next to him in defeat, reaching for his match. “Sorry, I’ll take them back and try to think of something else.”

“Ani, wait . . . it’s not . . .” Quickly backpedaling he announced, “Aishhh, You should know that’s just too short for my taste.”

The disappointment crossing her face apparent, he knew he was already failing ‘Boyfriend-101’. It was just a freaking couple’s outfit. He’d seen and worn worse. For the life of him he couldn’t think of what but, to prove his sincerity he slipped the sweater over his shirt anyway. At least it was soft and of good quality.

Totally out of character, Saffron squealed with delight at his sudden compliance. He looked so hot working the collar of the dress shirt out from the neckline of the sweater. “Oh my God! I knew you would look sexy in this and I promise I’ll wear leggings under the dress.” Following his lead, she tugged it over her white blouse, taking off the long skirt and prancing about the room like a couture model.

Caught up in her enthusiasm, he couldn’t help whistling at her long shapely legs when the skirt sailed indiscriminately to the floor.

“Damnnn Hani, you’re the one who looks hot, get over here.”

Seconds later, racing after her in hot pursuit, skidding on the slick wooden floor, he watched her lose a slipper tumbling ‘Saffron style’ to the ground at his feet. One hand covering his mouth to smother his laughter (without success), he fell beside her, his belly heaving at her antics.

“KIM HYUN JOONG!” Huffing loudly she smacked his leg, blowing wisps of tangled red hair out of her smiling eyes, “Stop laughing at me. What if I was hurt?”

“Mianhe,” Still chuckling uncontrollably he fended off her hands as he rose, hovering over her sprawled out form. “Are YOU? Let me kiss it and make it better.”

Unwilling to give up the game she grinned reaching for his shirt, stomping her one bare foot when he slid out of her grasp. And, then (much like the course their relationship had taken), she ended up pursuing him. Now, frantically whipping the hair from her eyes she chased the giddy idol through the house, getting a mere hairs-breath away before he dodged back out of reach, teasing her once again.

The sweater dress rode up her hips giving him a nice view of her white panties. Deciding he couldn't wait to get her out of the silky undergarment, the sure footed Idol seized the jumper with resolve hauling her delicious body to him, trapping her at the dining room table declaring, "I won."

"Pffft . . . Uh huh, I caught YOU."

"Yes, I'd say you did." His eyes narrowed pushing her onto the table, nestling his slender hips between her legs. Right now, he'd never wanted a woman as much as this one, she was his resting place. In haste, he bunched her sweater planning to lay her out on the table and feast on the honeyed skin when her fingertips stilled his hands.

"Hyunnie. Let's take a picture and send it to Saffire and JJ. I didn't get to wish her a Merry Christmas and she said you would hate the sweater."

"A . . . picture?" *Shit, he'd been waiting for this moment since stealing her from the café this morning. And now she wanted to take pictures.* Stepping away from her thighs left him horny and lonely. "Way to kill the mood, Debutante."

Tugging the dress into place Saffron watched as he adjusted himself looking for his phone. Shivering, she bit her lip. Spending this time with him had taught her sex was easy, but the emotional stuff was harder than she ever believed possible. *I hope to God I don't break your heart Joong.*

Rushing back, he spotted her sitting on the table one leg crossed over the other. Taking a quick photo, he failed to notice the somber glint in the blue eyes, contrasting with her seductive pose, (much like her fiery red hair did with the burgundy sweater).

"Mmmm, sexy baby."

"Keep it up and you might get that BJ you been hinting at all day." Being coy, tilting her head slightly, she fastened one hand to the curve of her hip.

"Aish, promises, promises," Catching her swinging foot, he turned wrapping her leg around him snapping yet another Selca. Handing her the cell, his smile fading, he snapped, "You text, and remind them of breakfast in the morning." Stepping away, he shuddered unable to get out of the ugly sweater fast enough.

“Okay.” Ignoring his disposition, she giggled at the picture. They made a cute couple, his dark looks complimenting her fair skin and red hair. Finger to her lips she contemplated her assignment. What would he say in a text to JJ? The ones he sent her were always short and to the point, he preferred calling over texting.

AREN'T WE ADORBS IN OUR COUPLE SHIRTS? MERRY XMAS COTTON CANDY PRINCE & PRINCESS. SEUNG JO & HANI WILL C U HERE AT THE CABIN AROUND 10:30 TOMORROW FOR BRUNCH.

Finally, after typing and erasing the message a few times, she was happy with it, hitting SEND. Wanting to keep the picture, she sent it to her cell when his husky voice filled the silence.

“My love, Christmas isn’t over yet. There’s one more gift to open.”

Setting the cell aside, she gasped, “OH MY . . .” and in a fit of laughter fell over clutching her stomach. For standing totally nude in the middle of the room, was none other than her own Prince beaming his thousand watt smile, a bow shrouding his erect penis.

Rushing the table, he flipped the hysterical Saffron over his shoulder, taking the stairs two at a time.

“Aghhh, Joong put me down . . . I can walk.” Her hands gripping his narrow waist she admired his splendid, tight backside rippling as he moved.

