

## Chapter Five – Part 2

“I don’t think . . . Then you shouldn’t talk!”



Taken from Walt Disney’s *The Mad Hatter*

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**PUTTING** his last crayon back in the small Crayola box, Jin sank back into the poufy couch cushion, studying his surroundings, as a daunting Sundae continued pacing from one side of the room to the other in front of him.

*Jimin and his big mouth had made sure none of them could do anything now. All he had to do was color the damn rabbit!*

Watching V bounded excitedly up the stairs, he began to think about the events of the past twenty-four hours. He wasn’t at all surprised by his hyung’s innate ability to blend into the unusual ‘order’ of things that seemed to rule the household they had stumbled into. He was nothing but a child in a grown-up body. If he didn’t know better, he would swear V and the Whyte sisters were related.

*What had the girls been talking about at the dining room window? All he had managed to catch was something about ‘took care of it . . .’ and ‘did it fit’? Care of what? And fit where?*



His curiosity getting the better of him, he cocked one leg up on the couch and turned to study the large plate glass window in the living room. Through the slightly parted curtains, he could see the white blizzard still raging outside.

*Had one of them actually gone OUT in that earlier? There wasn't any sign of footprints in the snow, wet boots, jackets, hats or mittens. How in the hell were they going to get out of here? There had to be a way out.*

It seemed 'locks' were the norm, but he knew enough to know all old houses had their secret hideaways, and usually a basement. Shivering at even the thought of a trip to the creepy basement of the falling down farmhouse, he still wondered if there wasn't a way out from there.

He needed a plan . . .

The second Sundae turned her back he nudged a now compliant Jimin, pointing upstairs, mouthing, 'Keep her busy'.

Then raising his hand like a schoolboy, he coughed to get her attention. "I need to use the bathroom," he announced matter-of-factly. *Surely, she wasn't going to deny him that. His picture was already complete.*

"Of course. Go on." She smiled at him accommodatingly, still tapping the ruler against her thigh as he rose. "But, hurry. The others are nearly done, and the box will be here shortly."

As his feet hit the stairs he glanced back, seeing Jimin motioning for her to look down at his abs, (his face, emotionless) in an attempt to keep her occupied.

"Sundae! How do I get these lines off?" he pleaded with her gravely. (He would get an 'Oscar' for that performance!)



*Now where was V? If he could find him, alone . . . without Sumre maybe they could make a sweep of the upstairs.*

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**TIPTOEING** quietly across the creaky boards of the second-floor landing, Jin's heart pounded a mile a minute, assessing the hallway of doors in front of him. Four large, one small. It was like being a contestant in a game show. *What was behind door number one, two, or three? The million dollars or the donkey?*

It didn't take but a few seconds for him to hear quiet singing from the last door on the right. *It sounded like a girls' voice. It had to be Sumre. But, was V with her?* Not taking any chances, and figuring anything was possible with V, he opted to head up to the third floor instead and go it alone.

Wiping his dry lips with the back of his hand, he finished the last few steps, stopping at the top of the third floor. This was where he and Jimin had been locked in before breakfast, this morning. He recognized the room with the #2 on it, and the chair outside the door. Behind it, the girly bunk beds and 'Alice in Wonderland' themed bedroom, he would have to endure yet another night.

It was obvious there wouldn't be a way out from either that room, or the other bedroom. If that had been the case, they would be half way to Korea by now.

Down the hall he dashed, to the last door on the left, hand on the knob, noticing it was open. AIGOOO, SUCCESS. Flinging it back he stepped inside . . . just as V stepped out.

"AGH. Watch it." Smacking each other in the chest they collided in surprise, Jin snatching V by the shoulders and throwing his hand over his mouth pointing outside the doorway. "Shhh. They'll hear us."

Nodding he would be quiet, V's eyes peeked above Jin's hand, before rolling behind him, to a medium-sized 'Alice' box, perched on the end of a large King-sized bed. "Box," he whispered into his friends fingers.

"Shit." *Now, after everything else, they had to worry about the stupid box.* "Later. We need to find a way out of here. There has to be a window or door unlocked somewhere."

Scrunching his shoulders, V followed Jin out the door and over to the end of the hallway. "What's that?" he asked pointing to a low, unusually square door with a modernized keyboard set off to one side.

“Dunno.” Jin bent to look at the keyboard suspiciously. “Safe maybe? Seems to be locked like everything else around here.”

“Looks like a laundry chute. But, why would they lock it?” V punched the keypad randomly, snickering as he went. “You think they’re trying to hide their collection of men’s boxers?”

Jin shoved him to one side, prying his inquisitive fingers from the pad. “V. Serious here. Don’t mess with that. What if you break it?”

Crouching back against the wall, V casually rested his arms across his knees. “Mianhae. I just don’t understand what the big deal is Princess.” Tipping his head back he sighed. “Everyone freaking out. They haven’t done ‘anything’ (except make Kookie sit between the wall).” Kicking out to Jin’s foot he smiled. “Come on hyung. He does that at the dorm all the time. What are we even looking for? Dead bodies or something? Ooooo. I’m scared.”

Jin looked down into V’s innocent face, wondering if this guy was serious or just attempting to play along hoping for a happy ending. *Sadly, he was pretty sure he was serious.*

“A way out babo (STUPID). You REALLY want to stay here another night?” Slapping him lightly on the forehead he bounded away to another door on the opposite of the hallway. “Come on. Let’s check this one. We don’t have much time. I’m supposed to be in the bathroom. And, your crazy new girlfriend is singing Happy Birthday all alone, in a room on the second floor.”

“Girlfriend? You think so? Really?” Standing up now V clung to Jin as the door to the second opening swung wide.

“Shut up Tae Tae . . . Please. You’re driving me crazy.”



Both heads tipped upward, the long narrow stairway that confronted them was nearly vertical, leading to what seemed to be an attic. The musty smell drifted down into their nostrils, causing Jin to stifle a sneeze. Covering his mouth with one hand he perched on the bottom step, craning his neck to see if he could see to the top.

“Well, I’M not going up there,” V announced, tugging him anxiously from the bottom of his white pants. “Besides, you’ll get dirty. Sumre’ll have to do wash again.”

“OH MY FREAKIN’ GOD.” Jin hissed, finger to his lips to hush him. “Will you STOP IT. Nobody said we were going up. There isn’t time anyway. We’ll check it out later. Those two have to wind down eventually. Come on. Get the damn box in there and let’s get back before Sundae realizes we’re up to something.”



“I’M not up to anything,” V announced scrunching his face playfully. “I was looking for the box. And, I found it. YOU’RE THE ONE IN TROUBLE!”

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**HER** fingers caressing the long dark tresses of the doll in her lap, Sumre hummed quietly to herself. It had been so long since she had played with the ‘girls’. For some reason, they had taken a back seat to the fun, when the boys came to visit.

The three girl dolls had been a special ‘acquisition’ to their collection after the three friends she and Sundae had bonded with over ‘Book Club’ their first year of college. Now . . . the only memories of ‘Alice’s Book Club and the ‘A-Girls’ (Alex, Andrea and Abby) were the dolls, meticulously played with and cared for.

Laying her back on the floor with the others Sumre curled her lips in a satisfied smile, smoothing the ends of her own hair in the process, remembering the make-overs and hairdressing techniques they had practiced using the dolls as their models.



Those days had been so much fun. Now it seemed all Sundae wanted to do was bake and read. She stayed in the kitchen most of the time when the boys weren’t visiting, mulling over recipes, trying in vain to find the PERFECT dish, and most DELICIOUS special cocktail.

For the most part, that left a lonely Sumre all to herself. The piano had gotten old, and she had already memorized all of Alice. Coloring took up some time, and then there were the dress-up clothes and photos.

*OH SHIT. Photos. The picture box. That was what she had come up here for. She had brought the ‘silly one’ with her to find it. WHERE WAS HE NOW?*

Half expecting him to be behind her, or sitting in a corner playing with a toy, she spun around flying off the floor, snatching the dolls as she rose. *They had to get to the dollhouse. It was imperative. Sundae's order had to be maintained at all costs.*

“Where are you?” she screamed, her free hand twisting the knob, careening into the hallway. “Are you lost?” Panicked, she mumbled, “No . . . Oh no, you can't get lost. It's a big house. I'll never find you,”

Now frantic, she raced up and down the spacious hallway throwing open each door and looking inside, before heading to the next. Her footsteps echoing in the silence, she flew to the stairs bounding up to the third-story bedrooms.

“Are you up here? Answer me. PLEASE. Sundae will be so mad.” Finally, unable to handle the stress of losing him, she tossed all three dolls over the railing clear to the bottom. Hearing them land with a plunk, the “OUCH” that followed rang up into her ears loudly.

Tipping over the side, she saw him, standing demurely, one hand rubbing the top of his dark head, the dolls scattered at his feet where she'd dropped them.

“OH. There you ARE. Oh dear, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have let you wander, but . . . I had no choice. Why did you scare me like that?” she squealed, slipping out of her flats and flying down the stairs in her bare feet to meet him at the bottom.

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