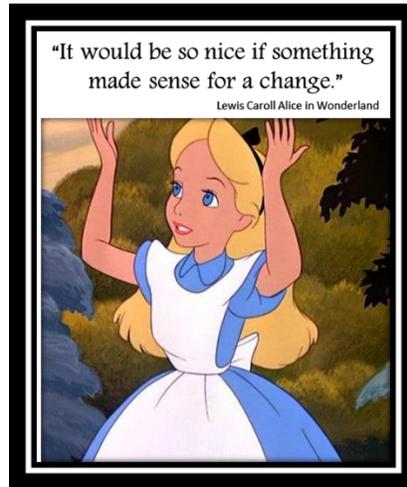


## Chapter Six – Part 1

“It would be so nice if **SOMETHING**  
made sense for a change . . .”



\* \* \* \* \*

**HOW** was it possible that in the middle of a blinding snowstorm there could be an oasis reminiscent of S. Korea’s soothing water gardens? The large plate glass windows surrounding the green trees, and bubbling sound of tinkling waterfalls, made it a favorite spot to relax.

RapMon settled back in the comfortable cushioned chair, studying the small gathering of new friends around him. In the middle of the afternoon, the hotel was a buzz of activity, with nowhere to go outside, and guests feeling cooped up in their rooms. They had been lucky to snag a spot by the gardens, chasing wildly through the lobby to the cushiest couch and set of chairs (parked facing one another for conversation).



Still worried about the location of the missing members it was becoming increasingly clear their hands were tied until the storm subsided. As much as his heart ached with uncertainty he knew they wouldn’t want the rest of them to worry.

The mysterious voices in his head had temporarily subsided, leaving him open for interaction with the others. Chuckling out loud, he couldn’t help noticing the somewhat reserved Abby

scanning the area, disregarding poor J-Hope entirely, as he kept nudging her to ask random questions. (No doubt she was scoping the room for souvenirs).

Suddenly leaping from beside Suga on the patterned couch, Andrea clapped her hands to get their attention. “Who wants to play an ‘Alice’ game?” she snapped enthusiastically.

For some reason, RapMon just didn’t see her as the gaming type, but her ‘let’s get going’ attitude was about as Cheerleader-ish as it got. It was clear she was the A-Sister’s illustrious leader.

“What’s an ‘Alice’ game?” Tugging her back down, Suga reveled in the curve of her backside bouncing up and down in front of his nose as she turned to explain.



“Well, Alice goes down the rabbit hole . . . She’s sort of LOST. You know the story. We just watched it.” Patting his leg endearingly her eyes were bright with enthusiasm. “So, how about Hide and Go Seek?”

“Ohhhh, geez . . . do we have to?” Abby moaned, throwing her head back against the sofa pillow, her legs stiffening in displeasure. “You know I’m horrible at it. Why? Can’t we go on a TREASURE HUNT instead? Yeah. Now that’s more my cup of tea.” Smoothing down her dark hair, her eyes continued scoping out the large expansive sitting area. “Bet I could find some REAL souvenir’s then, huh?” she teased, bumping J-Hope’s shoulder playfully.

“No. No treasure hunts . . . absolutely NOT.” Andrea rolled her eyes toward RapMon sitting quietly beside an equally as quiet Alex. “How about it you two? Hotels are the most fun to hide in. Can’t tell me you haven’t done it.”

Grinning, RapMon kicked one long leg over to J-Hope. “Oh yeah. We’ve done our share. Remember the restroom?” he asked, laughing out loud.

*It was true. She had hit the nail on the head. Seemed this girl who spoke Korean and knew all about KPOP had already guessed what it was like spending time on the road. Of course, they had played games in and around hotels and motels. What else was there to do?*

“YAH.” Flying up off the couch, J-Hope danced around in a small circle, not much caring who was watching. “I won . . . I won . . . I won.”



“Won what?” Alex asked, watching him curiously.

*He was so energetic, and the smile! Seemed he never stopped smiling, no matter what. Even though they were stranded, and their other group members were missing, still he smiled. No wonder they called him ‘Hope’. What was Abbey’s problem? Obviously, he liked her. And, still she sat beside him like a stick of wood, unresponsive, and unfeeling. Now, SHE wouldn’t treat him that way.*

Turning to answer Alex’s question RapMon continued watching J-Hope bouncing about chanting, “I won . . . I won . . . I won . . .” over and over again.

“Look at him,” he pointed out jokingly. “He won SEEKER title the last time we played. So, he gets to go SEEK. He can’t be quiet or stand still long enough to hide.”

“Sounds like a blast to me. I’m great at hiding. Bet you can’t find me,” Alex announced, tugging on J-Hopes sleeve as he crumped alongside her. Really wanting to get up and join him, she was afraid she would hurt Abby’s feelings if she did.

“Okay it’s settled then. ‘Hide and Go Seek’ it is.” Andrea leaned back into Suga’s shoulder satisfied that she had gotten her little band of sisters to step out of their comfort zones and have some fun, yet again. If there was one thing she hated, it was watching them sit around feeling sorry for themselves. This trip had been planned for just that reason. To have some fun. *And by GOD fun was what they were going to have (or die trying).*

“I know where we can go hide,” she whispered leaning into Suga, the scent of her flowery shampoo permeating the air about his head. “When J-Hope starts counting, follow me.”

“Okay.” Nodding agreeably Suga grinned. *How was he going to say no to THAT?*

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**DRAGGING** a reluctant Abby to her feet by one arm, Alex hoped she wasn't going to get into one of her moods and spoil things for everyone. They were here to relax and have a good time.



“Come on Miss-Mouse and don't complain. Look, your main squeeze over there is chomping at the bit to get started. Don't disappoint him,” she added quietly, nodding to J-Hope and his incessant dancing.

“He's NOT my MAIN SQUEEZE,” Abby hissed back, folding her arms defiantly.

“Really? Well that's good to know . . . Andi, we ready?” Looking over at Andrea she waited for her to give the word.

It was a go all around, Andrea popped into the circle hands clasped tightly in front of her, lips pursed as she perused them quickly. First, they needed to get their titles. It was the best part of the game.



“SO,” she announced, “because it's ‘Alice in Wonderland Hide and Go Seek’, we all have to be a character.” Pausing, she pointed to her chest smiling. “I'm Alice . . .” *She was Alice every time they played a game. She loved the adorable blonde character, who she resembled to a ‘T’.* “And, it's my job to assign all of you your character as well,” she notified the boys in a firm, no nonsense tone.

“REALLY? WHY? Why do you always get to be Alice? You're so BOSSY.” Abby shouted disgustedly. “I'm tired of being MOUSE. I am NOT a mouse. I want to be THE DUCHESS.”

Having made her point, she raised one eyebrow at Andrea like a petulant child, as if daring her to say ‘no’.

“Okayyy, missy! You DO KNOW the DUCHESS is a crazy, ugly bitch. But, you go ahead and be her if you want. See if I care,” Andrea sniffed back, shoving her friend slightly in the shoulder. “It won't help you in the long run. Shit, you need to go hide in the bar. Have a couple of shots while you're in there, and calm down.”

“What about me? Can I hide in the bar too?” RapMon chuckled, noticing that poor Abby was getting unnecessarily picked on, considering this was supposed to be an entertaining and relaxing afternoon event.

“Sure. Wherever you can go and not get caught. I think you should be the MARCH HARE. He probably takes a little ‘happy juice’ now and again, don’t ya think?” Giggling, Andrea pointed at J-Hope. “And you my friend . . . are the CHESHIRE CAT. I’m SURE you know the reason why.”

Appropriate enough. J-Hope quirked his lips slightly, knowing the ‘cat’ was famous for his wide massive grin.

“And my Suga . . .” Cupping one arm about Suga’s waist she sighed, “Is the KNAVE OF HEARTS, aren’t you sweetie?”

“Of course, I am,” he snickered back, not believing that this blonde bombshell was actually coming on to him. *How could he manage to pack her up and take her back to Korea when the storm finally broke? She was ‘perfect’.* This story tale ‘Alice in Wonderland’ game had never sounded so good.

“Everyone ready? J-Hope will shout, ‘You’re in Wonderland’, when he finds you, and text me a picture so I know. And, then you team up to keep looking. Okay? No phones, no calling, no texting each other. And J-Hope, there’s one condition . . . if someone finds you first, the game is over, and you have to take a pic of them shouting ‘Game over’ so we all know to quit. Got it?” Scanning their faces for any signs of reluctance or misunderstanding, everyone seemed to be in, but . . . Abby . . . typically.

With nodding heads and sparkling eyes all around, it was time to PLAY.

“Then hands in . . .” she ordered all of them, watching amused as even the boys huddled inward their hands touching. “Ready girls? Let’s hear it, ‘We’re late, we’re late . . . for a very important date’. . . A-Girls YEAH,” they chanted, sounding more like an athletic team before a big game than anything else.

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**SUGA** bounded across the carpeted hallway following Andrea's floating blonde hair. Suddenly without warning, she darted around a large partitioned wall at the back of an empty dining area.

"Yah. Wait up," he barked, barely squeezing between a table and large cart full of clean dishes. "We can't be back here."

"Mullon ulineun hal su (SURE WE CAN)," she hollered in Korean, grabbing his hand. Running quickly to the far corner, she flopped down in front of a massive cooler, stretching both legs out in front of her, waiting for him to follow suit. "Amudo anj-a, yeogie eobsda. (NOBODY'S HERE. SIT.)" Ordering him, she patted the floor beside her. "Isn't this daebak Knave?"

*Ahhh, he loved it when she spoke Korean. It was so sexy! And, he had to admit . . . she was adventurous to be sure. His hiding choices would have been more along the lines of an empty doorway, restroom, or at best, maybe behind an ice machine tucked away in a vacant hallway.*

Laying his head back against the cool glass refrigerator door, he smiled. *J-Hope would never find them here. He would go upstairs, thinking they would try to get as far from the starting point as they could. Poor J-Hope. He was so easy to fool.*

Suddenly, Andrea reached behind his head for the door opening. "Oppa, you think anybody'll notice if we borrow something out of here? I'm sooo thirsty. The pizza got to me." Scrunching her nose at him, she looked like a little bunny anxiously searching out a carrot.

Shrugging his shoulders, he swiveled around staring directly into the confines of the cooler. "Did you and Abby go to class to learn how to borrow things or something?" he snickered. "We should leave a note, tell them to put it on our room tab."

"That's more like it." Twisting around Andrea shoved him over slightly giving her room to open the cabinet. "I'm grabbing a water, how about you?" she offered, ready to put her hands on an ice cold bottle.

*What harm would it do? While letting her reach for a bottle, he spotted the can of whipped crème. Ooooo . . . if it was one thing he loved and never spent money on, that was it. Here was his chance. Taking the opportunity to sneak a little sugary treat he snickered quietly as he pulled it through the crack in the door. "I'll take some of this."*

“You’re such a ‘guy’.” Andrea crooned, watched him tip the can to his open mouth, the white frothy crème gushing out loudly as he sucked it down swiftly.

“Um huh . . .” Mumbling through the white foam, he let it melt savoring the sweet sugary taste as it slid down the back of his throat. Licking his fingers, he tilted the can toward her engaging face, “You? Come on,” waiting patiently to see if she would accept his offer.

Watching the nozzle dip closer and closer to her lips, Andrea debated, *Yes . . . no . . . yes . . . no . . .* finally closing her eyes and parting her mouth waiting for the stream to hit her tongue.



**What happened next . . . Was totally unexpected!**

As his soft lips met hers, the crème oozed out between the sides threatening to drip down the corners of her mouth.

Despite taking her by surprise, it was tender and affectionate. In those few seconds, she rolled the moment around in her head multiple times . . . unmoving. *Maybe her horoscope had been right after all. Maybe she WAS supposed to meet the man of her dreams. But, Knave? How unusual.*

Backing away, Suga gazed down embarrassed, his cheeks turning a bright red uncontrollably. *THAT had been totally unpredicted. His lips had taken over his body. The white crème, her closed eyes, shiny lip gloss . . . he couldn’t explain.*

Shuddering slightly, he laid the can down between them apologizing, “Mianhae.”

“Mianhae? What the hell for?” Pushing up against him anxiously, Andrea reached for the can, begging . . . “More please.”

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