

## Chapter Eight Part 1

“Have you guessed the riddle yet?”



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**THE** sun was out. Gleaming through the large plate glass windows of the hotel lobby, shooting slivers of diamonds across the dark carpeted floor. The loud noises and bustling excitement of anxious occupants was long overdue.

Upstairs on the third floor, alone in the empty hotel room, RapMonster checked carefully to make sure the room was clear of all their belongings and nothing had been forgotten. The others were already packed, their suitcases in the car, and had meandered out earlier headed to the dining room and breakfast. Check-out was finally upon them.

Catching the tail end of a local news report on the fall-out of the freak storm, he spotted something eerily familiar. The farmhouse he had seen in his dream, flashed across the screen, along with the headline from a report (at some other time), that two local boys were still unaccounted for after heading out of town one weekend for a party.



Stepping closer to the screen the lump in his throat increased s he turned up the volume.

“Local authorities . . . still looking for four missing boy-band members from the S. Korean group BTS. There has been no sign of them in the local area, and a

search party is currently being formed to comb the countryside in and around the Whyte farm, the only inhabited stopping point between here and the State line.”

“Due to the severity of the storm it is questionable whether or not they made it that far. This is an unusual situation considering this time last year (in the same vicinity) a similar search was underway for two young men who disappeared on their way out of town headed to a bachelor party in the Chicago area. They never arrived at destination, and still have not been heard from.”



The headache started slowly, creeping up the back of RapMon’s head as he studied the screen intently. As the hair at the base of his neck prickled in fear, his thoughts flew from one random question to another.

*Two other boys lost? Same area? And, the Whyte farm was the house he had seen in his dream with the ghostly face of a young woman in the window. Was it the elusive twins, Sumre and Sundae? The voices in his head had alerted him to the names more than once already. It was time to get some information.*

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**SURROUNDED** by officers, Bangtan Boys’ manager was already down at the check-out desk, arms flying about in the air anxiously, pointing out toward the road, nodding their heads agreeably.

In the crowded dining room full of patrons, catching a last-minute meal before finally heading to their allotted destinations, the large round breakfast table was still vacant except for two lone inhabitants, Abby and ‘Destruction’ (RapMon).

Awkwardly silent after their unexpected encounter in the utility closet the day before, Abby sat picking at her bagel, eyes skirting over toward RapMon curiously, (aptly named ‘the March Hare’ by Andrea). *He was so extremely attractive!* She couldn’t figure out why she hadn’t seen it before now. Here they were . . . packed up and ready to leave, and she was beginning to feel untimely fluttering in the far corners of her usually non-committal heart.

Trying not to stare, she noticed the shock of white blonde hair dipping over one eye as (lips moving without thinking) he concentrated on his iPad.

Not paying attention to her, on the heels of the news report, RapMonster had made it a point to write down everything he'd heard over the last two days. From the unusual voices in his head, to the dream of the rundown farmhouse, ending with the face of a blonde Whyte sister, peeking through the blinds. Still, haunting his memory the sounds of . . .

Happy birthday to you

They're beautiful

Play for me later

That girl there is the spawn of Satan

I'm late I'm late for a very important date

Sundae, Sumre, guys can I get down now? I wanna play too, I'm the Golden Maknae, aren't I

the Chosen One? Come on

Snug as a bug in a rug

Maybe they're trying to hide their collection of men's boxers

Sumre we need the box

*What did it all mean? They read like a riddle, making him feel like he was putting the pieces of an intricate puzzle together. And, what did he know about these quirky sisters the girls had mentioned knowing in college. Readers and followers of the 'Alice in Wonderland' phenomenon. What did Sumre have to do with the box? And, why was Kookie asking about being the 'Chosen One'? He hadn't sensed danger until this morning. Maybe the girls could help him get the answers he needed.*



Finally, unable to keep quiet any longer Abby leaned over and whispered quietly, "Hare, whatcha doin? A rap?"

Startled out of his blinding concentration, his eyes shot up having totally forgotten she was even sitting at the table beside him. The list now complete, he blinked at her quizzically trying to decide if he should attempt to explain what was going on or not. Alex had been his sounding board. Opting out until the rest of the girls arrived, he rolled his finger over the button, shutting it off.

“Ahhh, nuthin’ did you just call me Hare?”

Her eyes bore a hole straight through him, as she continued to study his face attempting to figure out if he was telling the truth.

“Yeah. It’s cute don’t you think? Andi hit your character right on the head. I guess we should talk about yesterday,” she finally announced bashfully. It was hard to believe that kissing him had been the highlight of her trip, and for some reason he seemed unfazed by the fact that it had even happened . . . accidental or not.

“Cute? I don’t know about that.” RapMon balked at the nickname, especially considering the annoying Alice chants that continued to bombard his thoughts. “What about yesterday?” His voice clipped, he let the casual question flip from his lips, cussing under his breath the moment it hit the air between them.

*DAMMIT. He didn’t mean it to sound that way. He didn’t want to hurt her feelings. If the circumstances had been different maybe they could have connected somehow. The kiss was great, and she seemed nice enough. But, he had tripped into her, in a typical lip-to-lip ‘Destruction’ moment . . . nothing more.*

“Ummm, I ahhh . . .” Stammering for the right words, she finally shook her dark head of hair unable bring herself to say what she was really thinking. “I’m sorry,” she finally apologized meekly.

Reprimanding herself for not only calling him the silly ‘Alice’ name that he probably hated, she had done what NO girl should ever do after being kissed by accident . . . Insist on talking about it. No wonder she struggled with boyfriends.

“Sorry? For what?” Before RapMon could figure out why she was sorry for something that was clearly not her fault (out of nowhere) J-Hope suddenly appeared. Leaning over the back of her chair, both hands clamped on her unsuspecting shoulders he grinned at the two of them happily.

“I know . . . I know DUCHESS, you don’t have to say it. You’re sorry I’m leaving, ye? No one to help cover you while you borrow something before leaving. It’s okay, I get it. We’ll swap numbers, keep in touch,” he urged her,



dropping his phone down casually, ready to reiterate and pick hers up. “Maybe I can send you some better souvenirs from Korea, without risking jail-time.”

Even though he was concerned, and anxiousness hit the road, RapMon leaned back in his chair smirking at his hyung’s boyish enthusiasm. *Leave it to the outgoing ‘playboy’ of the group. No doubt, he would make sure he got all three girls’ numbers before they ever left the dining room.*

Abby watched the phone plunk down in front of her, wincing with uncertainty. *She liked J-Hope and his ‘Cheshire Cat’ grin . . . it wasn't that . . . But it wasn't HIS number she was after, or who she wanted to stay in contact with. But, if J-Hope was going to be her only contact to the true goal, then giving out numbers was a no-brainer.*

Picking up the phone she gave in, proceeding to type her number in quickly, her eyes never leaving RapMon’s handsome face and crossed arms.

“YAH.” Suga barked from across the dining room, bounding up beside J-Hope. “What the hell, you didn’t wait for me.”

Noticing Suga’s fancy dress, and carefully done hair J-Hope flung out a chair next to Abby, “Sit, henseum (SOMEONE’S GOOD LOOKING). You took too long.” Flopping down beside her, he waved his phone in front of his hyung’s face grinning triumphantly. “I got her number. We swapped.”

“Ye, daebak.” Caring, but not . . . J-Hope returned to his phone, thrilled their Internet service had finally been restored.

“SHE didn’t wait for me though,” Suga grumbled petulantly. Glancing up at RapMon tapping the table nervously, he looked like he did when running late, or focusing before a show.

“SHE?” RapMon questioned, turning his iPad back on now that Abby was pre-occupied with the conversation.

“Aigoo. Babo (STUPID) Andrea. I told her I’d meet her for breakfast. When I got there, she was already gone. Have you seen her Abby?” he asked, skirting the crowded dining area not spotting the tall, lanky blonde he had become so attached to.

“Nope, sorry.” Abby considered the three boys already at the table, wishing at least one of them had offered to have breakfast with her. It had only been a fluke that she and RapMon had showed up at the same time. “She was up really early. Said something about itching. I think she might have gone to see if they had some cream in the gift shop or something.”

“Wha? Itching? From what?” Suga’s eyebrows puckered curiously. *What in the world would have caused her to be itching? Bed bugs? Nahhh . . . it was a fairly clean place. Allergic reaction? Hmmm.*

“Dunno. She’s allergic to dairy. But, she never drinks milk or anything when we go anywhere, she knows better.” Abby had also wondered why out of nowhere her friend had begun breaking out, complaining of hives, but not willing to divulge the reason or the source.

Suga gulped loudly remembering the can of whipped cream they had shared while kissing on the floor during hide and seek. *Shit, why hadn’t she said anything?*



“Is she okay?” His concern growing, he wanted to jump from the table, knowing he should go back to the room to check on her. Obviously, it was his fault.

“I guess. She was still in the bathroom when I left.” Abby admitted.

“Mann . . . hyunng?” Whining he turned toward RapMon looking for answers.

“Your call, dude.”

Smirking, Rapmon knew Suga was the sensitive, caring one. He took his relationships seriously. But, it didn’t matter what he’d decided because seconds later, Alex and Andrea waltzed up to the table arm-in-arm, giggling and pointing at the small gathering already present.

“Heyyy. Morning Knave.” Scooting up next to him her face beaming, Andrea apologized profusely, “Sorry, I didn’t wait.” Leaning in to his peaked face she asked curiously, “What’s wrong?”



“You okay?” Scanning her carefully there wasn’t a red spot visible. With her wide enticing eyes, she was beautiful . . . the picture of perfection.

“Yeah, why?”

“No rash?”

“Oh that. It’s okay.” Winking slyly, she slunk into the chair beside him, touching his knee under the table, reassuringly. “Just a little itching is all. I’m used to it.”

Nudging Abby slightly she frowned. “Abby! I told you not to say anything. It wasn’t worth getting him all worked up over.”

*Stupid girl always had to say something. It was embarrassing. Couldn’t keep a secret if her damned life depended on it. She really didn’t want ALL of them to know she and Suga had raided a fridge and played with the whipped cream yesterday. ESPECIALLY NOT ALEX. She was always reprimanding her for being too easy. Prudish girls. (Both of them.) Wouldn’t know what a real kiss was if it slapped them in the face.*

“Ahhh . . .” Alex sighed, ‘go easy. Look at her. She looks like she didn’t sleep a wink last night.” Staring at J-Hope, he fingered his phone, scanning his contacts rapidly before scooting it toward her gingerly.



“Number?” he asked quietly, “let’s keep in touch.” His usually grinning face was suddenly solemn and serious. *If she denied him after yesterday he would melt away into nothingness and never smile again. Her ambush kiss had been the climax of the two long dreary days stuck in the storm with his other crazy members.*

“Me? You want MY number?” Feigning innocence, she pointed to herself, hoping to GOD none of them could see her heart beating wilding out of her chest.

“Ye . . . I dooo . . .” J-Hope tapped it lightly his insides screaming. Arms flailing wildly in his churning stomach he watched her type the number into his phone and the sweet sexy smile that followed. *SUCCESS!*

Now, it seemed the only way to take the heat off the two of them was to make it look like nothing had happened and get all three girls’ numbers. Clearing his throat, he added, “Ah-hem, yours too Andrea,” his smiling eyes flashing genuinely in her direction.

“Okay. Sure, that would be great,” she agreed.

*After all, these guys were the wildly popular KPOP group BTS! And, hands down there were girls world-wide who would have given their ‘limbs and more’ to be in her position right now.*

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