

“ODD EYE”

Part 2



Hey, I know this sounds typical
But look at me, don't be scared

(Lyrics Sung By: SHINee)



5:45 P.M. - WU SWIMMING POOL, CON'T.

“**WHO** died? Shit Seok. Here I'm trying to apologize for blowing you off today and the other night, and you're trying to be cute. You do know you're not funny.” Hanging his head in remorse, Suni sank into the lounge Keis had vacated just minutes before.

On the heels of his odd behavior, the mild throbbing in her temples, she'd experienced after her 'lie by omission' to Daddy, roared to a full-blown tension headache. Staring down at his wind-swept locks, she cleared her throat, letting her fingers rake them into order, “Sorry. Don't worry about it. I was getting ready to text you, anyway.”

Chuckling, Suni could hear the stress in her voice. *Oh baby, don't even try lying. One liar in this relationship is enough.* Reaching up he gripped her wrist, dragging her down across from him. Threading their fingers together, he read the concern in the cobalt eyes he loved. Not knowing when all this began, it was still hard to believe Skippy's story, (but, he wasn't in the habit of gossiping like the others did). *Was it last year after her trip to S. Korea; his own mistakes with Val; or possibly her involvement with an Idol?*

“Baby girl, we have a lot to talk about.”

Nodding her head agreeably she responded, “Yeah, we do.”

Holy Mother of God . . . had someone seen her at Coco’s with Kim Hyun Joong and couldn’t wait to tell him? Well, if this was how it was going down she could deal. She just had to keep calm and get her story straight.

Licking her lips, IlSeok willed the increasingly annoying throbbing in her head to cease until she’d crushed his dreams yet again . . . but, before she could continue a loud squeaky voice cut through the sounds of the incoming tide.

“SSSOOEEKKKKYYYY, BITCH . . . you home?” Stumbling around the corner of the house came a drunken Val. Sandals in one hand, red solo cup in the other, she stopped cold (as if hitting an invisible wall) at seeing Sungjae turn and rise (in one motion).

Mother fuck what’s he doing here? Why am I surprised? Hope I’m interrupting a sweet touching moment. Jazzy had been very forthcoming about the activities of the innocent Seoky and the very hunky Kim Hyun Joong earlier at Coco’s. Sorry babe, just here to get the other side and confirm the gossip.

“What the hell Val?” Shocked, IlSeok rushed over to the swaying girl.

Gripping her by the arm she snatched the cup dipping her own nose in it for a whiff. Damn, since when had she started drinking hard liquor? Setting the glass carefully on the table, with Daddy barely off the premises, it would be just her luck to have it spill everywhere . . . leaving her the scapegoat.

“I gotta pee.” Swinging into IlSeok’s side, Val hugged her tight, whispering loudly, “I was on my way home . . . annn . . . had to pee. SO, I stopped TO PEE.”

“Okay, okay, come on.” Opening the French doors she lead her staggering friend into the house glaring back at Sungjae, her voice stern with warning, “YOU. Don’t move. I’ll be right back.”

Desperate to leave, Sungjae weighed his options. Clearly, incapable of dealing with them both at the same time, his immediate irritation was focused at Val for not telling him she was out drinking, only to show up here (of all places). *Why had she bothered to text him earlier saying*

she was staying in tonight? The summer had barely started and already the drama was so thick you could cut it with a knife.

The whoosh of the door alerting him, they'd returned, he saw IlSeok step out alone. Approaching carefully, he asked, "She okay?"

"No, she's not okay. She's still in the bathroom. Said she'd be out in a minute. Then, you need to take her home. I tried talking her into laying down upstairs but, she's being uncooperative and not making much sense . . . not that she could make the stairs anyway. Mother and Daddy haven't left for 'SM' yet, and them hearing her right now is ALL I need."

An awkward silence growing between the two, IlSeok picked up the cup, walking it over to the trash. *Ah shit, the bracelet, did he see it?* Funny he always noticed and commented on her accessories any other time. Spinning it on her wrist feeling the weight of the charm, she heard Hyun Joong's voice reminding her to, 'Take good care of my heart.'

"ILSEOK!"

"HUH. Sorry, what did you say?" Drawn out of that dark void between fantasy and reality, Sungjae's voice crackled against the sound of the seagulls overhead.

"Where, and who do you think she was drinking with?" Seeped in mixed emotions Sungjae was concerned. Val hadn't been herself lately. He took responsibility for a lot of her mood swings but, this drinking issue was new and foreign.

"How the hell should I know? I'm her friend, not her keeper." Shrugging her shoulders, IlSeok swiveled just as Val peeked her head out around the patio door, giggling coyly.

"Suniiii, donnnn be mad." Pouting she tip-toed toward him, dipping her head to his sweat soaked chest. "Sorrriyyyy, I should have texted. Forgive me? Pleezzze?" Snuggling into him, she closed her eyes wrapping both arms about his waist.

As if time stood still, IlSeok stared at the two of them imagining a scenario that had played out only a short time ago between sister, Keis and Daddy Wu, the whiny 'Forgive me' sticking to her psyche, forcing goosebumps up and down each arm. *Keis was right. Whining was childish and pathetic and definitely NOT HER forte.*

“Damn Val . . . stop it and let’s go.” Peeling her off him, Sungjae glanced over at IlSeok a pained and exasperated look on his face. “Can I come back?”



Shaking her head (more for her outlandish thoughts about her ex and best friend than his question), she wondered was it okay for Val to be so clingy, and he (somewhat) angry? It was almost as if he was pissed about her hanging out with someone other than him. *Don't be stupid Soek.*

“Later Suni, my heads about to explode. I’ll call you tomorrow.”

“Sure?”

“Of course, please go, before she pukes, just one more thing I’d have to explain away.”

Watching with apprehension as they floundered down the beach IlSeok pinched the bridge of her nose longing for an end to this bizarre day. Then, there it was, a whisper on the wind. Turning toward the suddenly cloudy sky, she scanned the horizon in search of ‘him’.

“Are you out there running the beach mystery man? Do you really exist for me? If so, I sure could use your help right about now.” On a whim, she took the phone out of her pocket seeing it was 6:11. *Wow, there were Keis’s mysterious ONES staring back at her.*

“Are you listening? I’m wishing for a new ‘Korean Boyfriend’. Think you’re up for the job? Are you even Korean?” Her voice trailing off, she stood deathly still, wondering how long should she wait for an answer?

Would he come running by and she’d hear it on the wind, like before? Or maybe the palm trees would rustle with the message and she just needed to listen. Hell, was she actually starting to believe all the voodoo and mystical crap Keis rambled on about?

Just when she was about to give up, two squawking seagulls dove straight at her causing her to jump sideways out of their path.

“Holy shit! Stupid damn birds! Forget, I asked.” But, SOMETHING was definitely up, an energy in the air she couldn’t quite explain. “Silly, probably a storm coming.” Shuddering she watched the gulls fly off over the sea tipping their wings as if signaling a ‘job well done’ to an

unknown entity. Wrapping both arms about herself, she turned away from the view heading for the house and a well-deserved nap.

Comforted at seeing Nose making his rounds, she nodded and smiled, slipping thru the kitchen door, when her phone buzzed in a message from Sungjae. VAL'S SAFE AT HOME. HAVE A GOOD NIGHT.

Sending a smiley face emoji, she shoved it into the back pocket of her jean shorts announcing, "Good, now where's the damned Tylenol?"

7:00 P.M. – 'SM' IDOL RECEPTION DINNER

"MY friend . . . I thought I was clear about only taking a few girls this year?" Glancing in the direction of Amanda, sipping wine across the dining table, MinSeok balked markedly whispering to the younger man at his side, "AND, only in an emergency. My stepdaughter Keis stays with us every summer. Damn, how long have you known me?" Licking his lips, his palms sweated in anticipation of the upcoming conversation with his beautiful (yet sometimes NOT so understanding) wife.

"This IS an emergency," the other man hissed back. "I can't help it their host family was unexpectedly called out of town. The higher ups won't let me put them in a hotel, not even with a Manager. Says it's too expensive and there are too many of us out there capable of taking them in a pinch. Sorry." Rolling his eyes, he hung his head pitifully knowing the consequences to his career if he wasn't able to talk MinSeok into taking the two male Trainee's (at least) overnight.

"Dear God, stop it. You look like my daughter when you do that. Alright, alright. ONE night. But, that's it. JUST ONE. So, you better get busy finding them somewhere else to go. Shit, Amanda's gonna have my ass. We're in the middle of renovations too."

His concession didn't make the decision any easier. With luck the girls would be in bed by the time they returned and (known for sleeping late), he and the boys would be up and out before they woke up. Now, to tell Amanda and meet these teenagers that 'SM' executive, Yoong Lee was so freaking enamored of.



"NO! Absolutely NOT . . ." Slamming her glass down on the table, Amanda's eyes shot up into her husband's handsome pleading face.

Where had he parked his brain lately? Insanity must've crept in when she wasn't paying attention.

“Mandy, love. Please. It’s just for tonight, and it’s already close to seven. We haven’t even eaten supper yet. I can tell you for sure, BOTH girls are exhausted from the day. Bet we can forego any introductions, and by tomorrow all this worrying will have blown over.”

Positive he could turn her around to his way of thinking MinSeok leaned down planting a kiss on the top of her sweet-smelling red hair his fingertips skirting seductively up the back of her slender neck.

“Just do me the favor of meeting them first. I’m sure they’re fine upstanding young men. They usually are, and Yoong Lee’s been singing their proverbial praises from the second I walked through the door.”

“Humph. Something like the upstanding young man YOU were when we met?” Her eyes flashing the truth, MinSeok’s eyebrows rose significantly.

“THAT was different!” His expression bordering on pathetic, (much like his friends had been) he conjured up again his crafty stepdaughter Keis, batting her lashes in his face when covering up a bold-faced lie. He wasn’t doing much better.

“Like hell it was. You’re incorrigible you know that? Sit down, you’re making a spectacle of yourself.” Drawing him into the chair beside her, Amanda kissed his smooth cheek. “It’s a good damn thing I love you so much. AND, that I’ve already had several glasses of wine. I’ll text the girls and let them know we’ll be late.”

“NO. Ahhh, don’t.” Stopping her from reaching for her phone, he smiled wanly. “Like I said, don’t you think it’ll be better if they just don’t know anything? Listen, we can take the boys for a little drive around Malibu, show them the sights and then quietly stash them away upstairs in the bunk room. Guaranteed . . . we’ll be home free. I’ll have them up and out by 7:00 A.M. at the latest. Cross my heart.”

Fingers slicing a cross to his nervously pounding chest he was desperate to satisfy everyone by keeping it under wraps. Recalling the gleam in Keis’s eyes when in the presence of established Idol, Henry Lau made him especially determined.

OH, there was a thought. Maybe he could weasel out of it if the Yook's would take them, what was two more? But . . . nooo . . . sadly, it was too late for tonight. He was screwed.



“MINSEOK Wu. I can't believe I'm letting you get by with this. You owe me. BIG TIME.”

Before Amanda could protest any further (unaware of their temporary status) the shining faces of teenagers Choi Minho and Kim Kibum were greeting her kindly, appreciative of the opportunity to finally meet their host home couple.



Taken aback at their adorable demeanor and impeccable manners, she gripped MinSeok's fingers under the table in a gesture of good will, letting him know maybe she'd been too harsh in misjudging them beforehand. Noticing the same hungry look for success that her husband had boasted of when she met him, it was easy to be captivated in their presence.

Hand out, she crooned quietly, “Welcome to Malibu . . .” an uncontrollable blush creeping up her face.

Now, to say Mr. Wu was worried was an understatement. Having paraded Trainees of both sexes in and out of their house before, he'd never had any boys spend more than an afternoon or evening and especially not overnight! Even though he'd talked his wife into it, hearing the flirtatious lilt to her voice (typically meant only for him) was making him perspire visibly.

What if something went wrong? It was a fact . . . ALL the women in his life were as unpredictable as the weather.

