



"All good things  
come to an end,  
nothing lasts  
forever."

Story

yuukisan

## Chapter 1

### Right Now

All good things come to an end, nothing lasts forever. Flowers wither away, humans and animals die, seasons change, the human memory weakens and sometimes, feelings fade. It is indeed inevitable but what matters is the legacy that one leaves behind and what it does to influence other people's lives.

So Nyuh Shi Dae or globally known as Girls' Generation's disbandment was sadly tragic, not only to Koreans but to their international fans as well. People, mostly fans, cried and mourned like someone died, impossible as it may seem but it was a rare time when Koreans are in a very forlorn state they couldn't even do a single job right.

It was gloomy, the atmosphere was gloomy.

SNSD

Korea's national girl group

Beloved, admired and desired.

It's not something that would go on forever, the fans knew that. It's just a matter of taking it in a mature way. Sure there are rabid fans going insane crying, flailing their arms about shouting 'No! This can't be happening!' that amongst other wilder things you can see on their blogs but there are the reasonable ones, probably those who've been fans since the group debuted. They would smile, shed a tear or two and sigh in relief with the thought 'Finally, you girls can come back to your normal lives, no more hectic schedules, rigid routines and nasty below-the-belt commentaries, Finally, you can rest and just be yourselves.

Other Korean entertainment companies would rejoice deep inside. One big rival down, we must work harder for us to reach the apex of this industry, it'll be easier now that they're gone. Most

kpop groups were chopfallen as well, though already successful in their careers, they're humans too, they are fans, they are friends of SNSD. It's hard not to love them.

The members themselves have a hard time taking it all in. They spent the remaining days as a group going around the country doing farewell performances and interviews that were broadcasted internationally. After that they would go home together, not to their million dollar homes but to their old humble dorm. They'd watch movies and just savor the meager time left, order Chinese take-out and take thousands of pictures, videos and be happy, halfheartedly.

But then they would cry, they would sob so hard until no more tears came out of their eyes. Gathered in their favorite position of a circle, they would hold hands, hug, foreheads touching they would say things to each other.

"Thank you for taking care of me"

"You guys worked hard"

"Let's not forget this, what we had. No one should ever forget."

"Good luck on your lives"

"I'll miss you guys"

"I love you"

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Two years had passed and the storm seemed to have calmed. People are moving on with their lives, the occasional stans and paparazzi are still there but they aren't that hyped anymore, it is as if SNSD is a big part of Korean music industry that they have to check up on them from time to time. They've become less harmless and more casual, much less interested than before since rookie groups keep popping out from various companies. The fresh ones are always fun to talk about.

“Yes, you better not skip out on me! You hear me?!” Sunkyu playfully yelled, a phone on her ear. She was carrying a paper bag on one arm and somewhat jogging a little. The call ended, she pocketed her phone and entered her car.

“Took you long enough for a carton of milk.” Sooyoung said, sitting on the passenger seat and rummaging through the car’s compartment for a snack but found nothing but old game tapes and an adult film cd.

Her eyes widened.

“What the hell Sunkyu?!”

“Hey! Don’t judge! That’s not mine, it’s Yuri’s, I’m planning to give it back later” Sunkyu spoke in defense, starting the engine afterwards.

“But you’ve watched it?” Sooyoung pushed further.

“Um, just some portions...” the shorter girl mumbled inaudibly.

“Oh God!” the taller girl feigned disbelief and slapped her forehead.

“Porn aside, where should I drop you off?”

“KBS please, I have a taping in less than thirty”

“Aww well would you look at that, accompanying me even though you’re busy, thanks Soo” Sunny baby-talked.

“Oh shush, I’m just worried you’d get buried in all those grocery bags with what little height you have” Sooyoung pointed at the heap of paper bags at the backseat.

“Gosh, you still can’t stop fussing with my height, can you?!”

“Yah! Eyes on the road, I don’t want to die yet, we just started living our lives again”

That seemed to calm Sunkyu down as the car stopped wheeling from left to right, regaining its well aligned position on the road.

“Taeyeon called” Sunkyu rattled off, Sooyoung turned her head and smiled widely.

“Really?! That’s great! Will she come later?!”

“Yes. Also, she said she’s going to bring someone”

“Oh? Hmm, so she’s finally getting some action huh?”

“Seems so, give me a guess?”

“Nah, can’t think of anyone except you know.. but that’s impossible since she just got married.”

“True, it came as a shock for me, seriously speaking.”

The car had reached the prestigious building. Eyes turned to the two as they said their goodbyes. There will probably be an article out by tomorrow about that, Sunkyu thought.

“I’ll just have to stock up on pasta, I guess.”

“Yeah, you do that since I won’t have the time to eat any of the snacks I brought today, gosh, this day is going to be a long one.”

Sunkyu rolled her eyes and smiled.

“Don’t forget to bring Yoona” she reminded.

“Will do, now get out of here, drive safe!” Sooyoung patted the car’s roof before going inside to do her business.

Her phone buzzed with a familiar song from one of their successful albums.

“Can’t believe she hasn’t changed it, probably don’t know how” Sunkyu giggled to herself.

“Hello?”

“Sica! I’m on my way back, I dropped off-“

“Sunny! You won’t believe who just arrived at your doorstep!!!”

Sunkyu shopped for supplies and ingredients for tonight’s house warming party. She just bought a new one near Gangnam, it was stylish and modern. Yuri helped her pick that house.

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Nothing much had changed in that span of two years, just them finally having absolute freedom. Going clubbing, meeting old and new people, having lots of fun, experiencing stuffs they were restricted to do before.

Nothing much

Just catching up with life

Their bodies haven’t adjusted with sudden change though. Before, they long to sleep for a whole day, especially Jessica who’s sleepy most of the time and Yoona because of her inhuman taping schedules. Considering their almost jam-packed itinerary every day, there’s no time for sleep. It’s kind of funny, now that they have all the time in the world, their bodies won’t let them sleep. It’s like a smoker’s withdrawal syndrome when one decides to quit the vice.

Right now they dialed down the parties and clubbing shenanigans focusing more on family vacations and what business to put up since there won’t be any salary from the company anymore, better think of something to keep the income flowing, that, and the constant gatherings they have whenever everyone’s free. They had promised to not forget.

*“Let’s not forget this, what we had. No one should ever forget.”*

And none did.

Some of them are dating, yes, but no one's married yet. Well, except for one.

"Tiffany!" Yuri cried out, hurriedly kicking her heels away, clumsily slipping into one of Sunkyu's house flip-flops. She lunged herself at Tiffany and gave her a bone-crushing hug.

"Yuri..." Tiffany breathed and hugged back, her eyes disappearing. Jessica is leaning against the balcony's sliding door with arms folded, a sweet smile plastered on her face as she watched the celebrated members of SNSD- no, as she watched her dear friends come in one by one.

Yuri, Yoona, Sooyoung, Hyoyeon and Juhyun now surround Tiffany bombarding the poor girl with endless questions.

"Oh my God! How are you?! You're a bit tan!"

"Unnie, let me see the ring! Oh! It's marvelous!"

"How was honeymoon in Morocco?"

"Is he treating you well? Tell me the truth!"

"One at a time girls, one at a time!" Tiffany surrendered her hands up, smiling with her usual contagious smile that makes you want to hate yourself for looking at it, it's that beautiful.

A beautiful smile for an equally beautiful face

No wonder, she's Korea's top eye-smile killer.

They looked at her expectantly. Tiffany sighed, there's no way out.

"It was really good. After we got back from Morocco, he surprised me with a vacation villa in Phuket. It was nice and beautiful, it's near the beach, I bet Jessi would love it there" Tiffany spoke, and gave Jessica a teasing look which the latter dismissed by rolling her eyes at the girl.

"But we'll probably stay in Korea for a few years, I mean, our roots still belong here, we can't just leave." She finished.

"Unnie, I can't believe you're married now..." Yoona spoke with seriousness, almost pondering.

"Yeah, and we all thought Hyoyeon unnie would be the first to tie the knot" Juhyun agreed.

“Am I supposed to be disappointed with that fact?” Hyoyeon playfully countered while wrapping Juhyun in a light headlock.

“Ugh, let go!” the youngest protested.

“Okay, you kiddos continue your bickering elsewhere, go fiddle with Sunkyu’s new plasma TV or whatever.” Sooyoung shooed away a bickering Juhyun and Hyoyeon followed by Yoona who was in a dilemma on whose side to pick.

“So fany... First of all, Congratulations. I know I was at your wedding personally and I saw the whole thing but still, I would like to congratulate you this time not as an SNSD member, but as a close friend.” Sooyoung said meekly, gripping both Tiffany’s hands in her.

“Aww, Soo, thanks a lot, you don’t know how much that means to me” Tiffany answered, eyes forming into thin crescents.

“But I have to ask..” Sooyoung pushed on. Tiffany’s heart suddenly fell. She knew where this is going, she bit her lip.

“Are you really happy?”

It was such an easy question, such a simple question even a three-year old wouldn’t have any problems answering, but why does it feel like the hardest question ever thrown at her?

Was it a Yes? No? Maybe? She looked at Sooyoung. Tiffany knew everyone was a bit troubled when she suddenly announced her marriage to Nichkhun, but they respect her so they didn’t probe any further except for Sooyoung and Jessica. They tell you the worst things knowing it would help.

Help what? Clear her mind? Did she make the wrong move? She looked at Sooyoung, she’s so pretty, Tiffany actually envied her big eyes, prominent cheekbones and her long beautiful legs. Sooyoung didn’t look troubled; her smile was kind, patient, and understanding.

Much like Taeyeon’s

Right

Taeyeon



We popped the balloon Tiffany's been avoiding since her arrival. Just the thought of her brings a smile to her face and somehow tonight, an ache in her heart.

Taeyeon, her first roommate.

Taeyeon, the one she lived with for almost half of her life.

Taeyeon, her best friend.

Taeyeon, the one who cares the most.

Taeyeon, whose love for her never faltered.

Taeyeon, her wife for...eternity?

Funny how she said that but couldn't keep it, I mean it's just for fanservice right? And an appreciation for all the things Taeyeon did for her since they were fifteen. It's just that. Her mind was hazy, her heart hurts, she's somebody else's wife now, not Taeyeon's, and her heart really hurts.

Oh don't be so immature and melodramatic; you're being carried away by that stupid pairing people invented. She scolded herself. This is reality; everything's nothing like a fairytale come true. The truth hurts. Suddenly, Tiffany doesn't like the truth anymore.

Suddenly Tiffany wanted to cry. Her eyes feel warm behind the lashes, she could picture them herself, the glossy eyes, though strong, she's vulnerable when it came to emotions and feelings. But why would she cry? And for whom?

Herself? Taeyeon? Or perhaps...her feelings for Taeyeon?

Does she even have feelings for the girl? If there is, then why is there a ring on her finger? Taeyeon didn't give her that.

Oh yeah. Nichkhun gave her that. The guy she dated for a long time now. The guy with big, adorable eyes and bushy eyebrows, charming, has a nice voice, loves God and loves her. She should be happy, everything's perfect.

Is it not?

Long, slender arms engulfed her front and around the shoulders, her reverie was broken. Sooyoung is very understanding of certain situations, she doesn't judge like most people. She'll try her hardest to understand because she is a good friend, a very good one. Sooyoung's always there, watching them, protecting them, serving as a buffer when things between her and Taeyeon get too intense, especially in public events, be it arguing or just plain clinginess.

She's very considerate. What Taeyeon is, What Tiffany is and whatever's going on between them. All of the girls, including sooyoung, accept and love them the way they are. It's amusing when Tiffany browses the internet sometimes and find candid pictures of her so-called pairing with Taeyeon, Sooyoung would be in the background, seemingly acting as a watch-out and how people would call her President of the taeny shippers or the first locksmith (that's how people call themselves if they're fans of the so-called taeny pairing, Tiffany learned that through the internet). She would laugh and then realize how lucky she is to have a friend like Sooyoung. To be friends with the other eight girls.

Her cheeks feel the familiar chest of the tall girl. Sooyoung tightened her hug and placed a tender kiss on Tiffany's temples.

"You don't have to answer" Sooyoung pulled away and was walking back to the troublesome trio causing chaos in Sunkyu's newly furnished living room. That girl would freak.

"Soo.."

The tall girl glanced back and smiled.

“Is Taeyeon—will she come tonight?”

The smile gradually turned into a sad one, almost pitiable.

“Yes”

## Chapter 2

### Back then

Working for hours on end was something Taeyeon's good at, after spending countless years training and performing on stage, her body had adjusted to the tough routines and merciless schedules. Today though, for no specific reason, she feels overworked, dead tired and exhausted but it has only been four hours since she clocked in.

Her eyes were affixed to a sheet of paper. A paper with five lines, notes, lyrics and scribbles on the side, probably reminders she wrote for herself. It was expected that the company would offer them individual contracts, Taeyeon especially. Looking back, this is what she wanted from the very start, to become a solo artist. But then some twisted fate interfered and suddenly she was thrown into an outrageously large sized group of girls where everyone was beautiful and will become more beautiful after debut, everyone's good in dancing, singing and in facial expressions. She was afraid and insecure. Dread boils in her throat as the thought of getting cycled out dawns on her and then she'll have to come back to Jeonju as a total failure and cry, cry a lot. All she wanted was to chase her dream, she just wants to sing, why must that dream be so hard to achieve?

She looks at them queasily and feels small, like the runt of a litter. And they're very animated. Animated and energetic in practice, animated and energetic in breaks, animated and energetic and...and...confident. Something Taeyeon wasn't. She wanted to run away and cry, she didn't know what to do with herself, how to fit in, she was always so awkward and talks little to none.

She's only confident when she sings, her aura changes from a poor puppy to a feisty fox, she's confident because she knows her voice is better than any of those girls. They would stare at her, awestruck, and it feels good inside, they are noticing her. All eyes were on her. Kim Taeyeon, the country kid from Jeonju.

Days later, one of the girls approaches her. Taeyeon isn't good with socialization. She grew up in a quiet place with just her family and a few friends. Seoul is loud, busy and crowded, but the people in Seoul know how to adapt to other people, socialize, best friends after a minute of talking. That thought she found absurd. Friendship is easy but true friendship takes years of honing, of trials, arguments and trust-earning and...and love.

It was their break time. Taeyeon sits cross-legged on the floor, alone, eyes on her lunch, kimbap. A shadow hovers over her and she looks up fearing for the worst. Maybe today is the day she'll get bullied, pushed around and teased because of her height or where she came from. Mouth agape, she couldn't chew nor gulp. The girl was taller than her, this girl is the one who sits by the air conditioner every time she finds a chance and her face was stoic, serious, scary.

"You're blocking my bag" the girl speaks and Taeyeon was quick to move, scrambling to her feet, looking for a new spot.

"Don't bother" she says again, she lowers herself and looks at Taeyeon. Stupid Taeyeon with her mouth open and rice grains stuck on her cheeks. Taeyeon wants to swallow but couldn't. She looks back at the girl.

Her eyes were boring and droopy.

The girl gently pokes her nose, Taeyeon's heartbeat quickens.

"Do you even talk?" she asks.

Taeyeon's throat suddenly worked as she gulps down her food. She was about to speak when the girl's hand landed on her face, gingerly plucking out a grain that's been stuck there.

Taeyeon's heartbeat never slowed.

"You're cute" the girl says and pops the grain into her mouth.

"I'm Sooyeon, but you can call me Jessica, what's your name?"

“T-Taeyeon”

“Nice name, Taeyeon-ssi, would you like to eat with us?” The so-called Sooyeon asks and nudges her head to the side where Taeyeon sees a group of girls forming a circle, merrily chatting and eating; a few of them looked at her and smiled.

She looks back at Sooyeon and nods her head, enthusiastically.

Sooyeon smiles at her, warmly. It was the first time she saw Sooyeon smile but then again, it was the first time Sooyeon interacted with her. Later, she learns their names. Stella, Hwanhee, Yejin, the boisterous ones Yoona and Yuri and Seohyun, the pianist. Sooyeon sits beside her and Taeyeon feels comfortable, They ask her what kind of kimbap she has and the conversation continues on. She was never the odd one out after that day. She walks home, calls her mother and brother, her tone was chirpy, happy. Her mother feels relieved and Taeyeon slept the night without a heavy heart.

Though Taeyeon was older than her, Sooyeon acts as if she is, but not in a bad way. She would drape her arms around Taeyeon's shoulder and chat with her, fix Taeyeon's hair, hold Taeyeon's hand and do all sorts of things to her cheeks then she'd look at her, deeply. Taeyeon was also a rookie in this aspect; she tries to crack the code behind Sooyeon's stares but fails. She learns from Yuri that Sooyeon came from San Francisco.

Where the hell is that place?

San Furanshisko?

Oh, it's English.

Must be from America.

That explains it, that's how they do it in the movies, Sooyeon's behavior towards her is just normal friendship. She feels relieved and somewhat...disappointed? Nah... Sooyeon is kind to her, very kind. It's just friendship, she later confirms that when Sooyeon started dating a guy from a popular boy group also under the company's management. She congratulates Sooyeon

which she now fondly calls Sica, they talk about things that couples do, how she's treated by her boyfriend or oppa or whatever, Taeyeon's not really interested, she was never the relationship type nor the marriage type anyway.

They remain friends, Sooyeon is still clingy, Taeyeon lets out a relieved sigh, when she doesn't feel any pain knowing that Sooyeon is dating. She's not hurt and she doesn't like Sooyeon that way, or maybe she just did a good job trying to prevent it. She's normal, and she's trying her best to convince herself that she is.

Sooyeon is unsure, if she did the right thing dating that guy. He's cute and charming, a sweet talker, and he kisses very good. But sometimes she feels as if she's missing something, she did that because well, she wanted to date, curious and afraid at the same time, not of the rumors that she's flirt, that she's a slutty girl, gosh just how old is she to have had so many boyfriends they would say. Those people were quick to judge because they're imbeciles, she thought. She was afraid of her feelings. At first, it was just friendship and admiration because Taeyeon has a very nice voice and Taeyeon is so cute and adorable and suddenly, Sooyeon fears that she might actually like the girl. Taeyeon has this uncanny way of luring people into liking her without her even knowing it.

Natural charm

And it worked on Sooyeon, unfortunately.

But they're trainees set to debut someday and she doesn't want to cause any problems for the group or expose the truth in the form of rumors that would endanger their blooming careers, Taeyeon's especially. Yep. Taeyeon. They haven't debuted, yet the girl already has a troop of sasaengs following her. There's a slight tinge of envy in her heart but she smiles at the thought. Taeyeon will be very famous one day. And so she diverts whatever feelings she has to someone else but continues to be friends with Taeyeon. A kind, thoughtful, clingy friend to Taeyeon. Loving her in complete silence.

Months later, routines flow smoothly, the girls had adjusted to each other, the room is filled with laughter and chit-chat, Yuri is doing something stupid and funny, minutes later, Yoona joins in and they all laugh at the twosome's silly antics. Sooyeon laughs, just a little, childish things like this don't usually amuse her, especially coming from America, this isn't what humor is, it's just plain stupidity, but she laughs anyway because the other girls laugh and she glances at Taeyeon sitting beside Yejin, she chews on her lip for a moment and then looks away, laughing or at least pretending to laugh.

Taeyeon becomes close to Yejin, the youngest trainee. They become too close, dangerously close. The other girls were a bit thrown off but their mindsets aren't from medieval ages, they had learned that things like that are normal and it happens despite the very high percentage of homophobia in Korea. They cover up for Taeyeon and Yejin.

Sooyeon becomes a little grouchier and silent than usual.

The moment stretches on.



### Chapter 3

#### Back then pt.2

It was just another tiresome day as Taeyeon heads back to the dorm. She imagines herself twisting the doorknob, the door opens, she sees herself flopping down on the bed, sweaty clothes still on, she breathes in the scent of the newly laundered bed sheets and drifts off into a mild nap, too tired to even completely take her sneakers off so she sleeps with a shoe on.

But to her surprise, she wasn't alone. There was a girl inside her room, back facing her; she studies the girl who was innocently and unintentionally snooping around Taeyeon's desk. She wanted to alert the girl, who was probably a new trainee, of her presence but like most days, she was too tired to do anything else after practice. She sighed heavily, causing her bag pack to slip off her shoulders and fall on the floor with a loud thud.

The girl jerks back from looking at Taeyeon's belongings and turns around.

They stare at each other.

Taeyeon's eyebrows were blatantly impassive and dismal; the initial shock of having a new roommate other than Sunkyu had sank in her consciousness. On the other hand, the new girl was fidgeting with her hands and feet, lip drawn tight and eyebrows somewhat raised with worry, a feature Taeyeon found strangely adorable. She set the thought aside.

"I'm so...sorry, I was just looking around, I didn't mean to snoop" the girl explained in unbelievably smooth English.

Taeyeon's eyes widened for a bit, disbelieving what she just heard. She hated it in school and now this girl she's about to share a room with speaks it so fluently it makes her ears fall off.

English

*Fuck.* She thought

She exhaled and with what meager English skills she has, managed to say a crooked 'It's okay', somehow understanding what the girl was implying with the way she gestured her hands, pointing it at Taeyeon's things, doing a swift double wave with her hands and a head shake. Taeyeon proceeded to her bed; the girl retreated back to her side of the room, looking at Taeyeon, expectant but cautious.

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It wasn't an easy thing any fifteen year old could do, to risk everything tangible you have and flee to another country which language you don't even know how to speak. Then again, Stephanie isn't an average fifteen year old. Stephanie is different, she dreamed, aimed high and when fate gave her an opportunity, with no hesitation, she grabbed it with haste even if that meant pleading and bickering with her father, convincing him to allow her to go. It really wasn't easy, she's fifteen and impulsive and impatient, she wants it now.

But of course what kind of parent is he if he allowed his youngest to go forth in that kind of dangerous journey? It's not even that Stephanie can't speak Hangeul properly, what about school and education, Stephanie should take up business in college or law, he knows very well that his daughter wanted to be a lawyer, he'd gladly agree with that. But this?

What? An idol? What nonsense. What would she become after being an idol? Retrograde into some mediocre office worker? Impossible. Why can't Stephanie just follow her sister's footsteps into business? Even Leo's into business. He blamed himself for spoiling Stephanie too much, what can he do? The girl was his youngest and the girl lost her mother at the tender age of eleven.

He still remembers the day Stephanie came home beaming and so ecstatic it made everyone in the household feel oddly fizzy because of her wide smile and her eyes that smile along whenever Stephanie smiles. At dinner, Stephanie munches on steak and mashed potato while constantly telling stories of her audition spree and how she won first place and how she wanted to become the next BoA and how credible the company is, having produced so many popular artists.

“I will work very hard and be famous!!!” she roars after finishing a glass of juice. Michelle looks at her sister endearingly, then to their father’s suddenly stern expression, she looks down and continues to eat.

“Miyoungie, don’t forget oppa when you become popular, okay?” Leo says, smiling that same smile, encouraging her sister.

“Get my autograph now while you still can, Oppa” Stephanie jokes. Leo laughs along, only to be interrupted by their father clearing his throat and giving Leo a meaningful look as if to say *‘do not tolerate her further’*

“Miyoung! Stop talking and finish your meal.” Their father barks, leaving the air with lingering authority. Stephanie nodded and everyone ate without another word.

He also couldn’t forget the three whole days Stephanie acted as if he didn’t exist after he opposed her decision to continue training in Korea. In those three days Stephanie didn’t speak nor acknowledged him, she just cooped herself up in her room listening to Korean pop music on full volume and watching music videos on her laptop. She’ll only ever get out for bathroom breaks and in meal times, she’d get a miniscule serving and eat upstairs.

Ah, women and their silent treatment. It never gets old in any given situation, he thought.

It was a pleasant morning at the Hwang's household as Mr. Hwang heads for the door to collect the daily paper when he saw an envelope addressed to her daughter Stephanie. For the longest time, he pondered, the coffee he was holding had gone cold. He emitted a deep and loud sigh before climbing the stairs whilst scratching his head using one of the pointed tips of the envelope.

"This came in today" he said, leaning against Stephanie's doorframe.

The girl didn't move, she had her back turned to him.

"It was from that company you auditioned for...: he rattled off, eyes narrowing on the white envelope as he read the company name with difficulty. He had forgotten his spectacles downstairs.

Just by mentioning that a letter had come in for her made Stephanie flinch, It had been four days and they're probably waiting for her confirmation. She wanted to cry and lash out at her father, He could've just thrown it away since he's not allowing Stephanie to go anyway, so why must he go in there and make it seem like a slap on the face.

It's over, my dream, it hasn't even started yet but it's already over. She thought.

They'll give that opportunity to someone else, probably to the second runner up whose name Stephanie didn't bother remembering because at that moment, she was living the dream. She won and staff after staff kept interviewing her for recruitment and things her young mind couldn't comprehend, but the focal point was she's going to attend the training proper in Korea under the company and hopefully debut as an idol, they told her not to worry about schooling because there's a foreign educational institution for her and the company would cover all the fees and the only things she'll have to focus on is work hard and try to make it big.

Her dream was so close yet so far. Quick waste.

She shifted; an audible snuffle was heard within the four corners of her room.

“Three conditions...” Mr. Hwang sighed in defeat.

Stephanie’s sobs stopped abruptly and her heart skipped a beat. Suddenly, her eyes went big, Is she really hearing what she’s hearing?

“You have to call, as often as you can...” he started. Stephanie bit back a smile, listening attentively knowing she had completely won him over.

“Whenever there’s free time, or if there isn’t, I don’t care, you have to make a way. Always, always call. Second, schooling. I want you to study hard and get good grades even though you’re training. In that way, if ever you don’t make it in the industry at least you’ve got somewhere else to go. Lastly, Influences. I know children and teenagers in Korea are harmless compared with the ones here in America. Choose your friends wisely, I don’t want to hear anything about you being involved in fights, drugs, anything illegal and do not talk to boys, Miyoung, I am telling you, if you’re going to have a boyfriend, you should be at least 25 years old and already accomplished something in life, plus, I have to meet that person.” He scoffed.

Stephanie’s smile can’t be contained, she had her victory and she was rejoicing inside. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! I am going to Korea! I am going to Korea! She sing-songed inside her mind, toes curling in anticipation under the blanket.

"If you ever break one of those conditions, God forgive but I will drag you back here in Diamond Bar." He finished, nodding his now aching head. He turned away to get back to his breakfast downstairs when arms tinier than his wrapped around his abdomen.

"Thank you Daddy!!! Thank you!!! I promise I will follow all of those" Stephanie said with her usual excitable loud voice. He knew she was smiling to no end even if he couldn't see it. He placed his hand on her daughter's arms, rubbing them lovingly.

"Alright, alright, go pack your bags you'll be leaving the next day"

Stephanie dashed back to her room.

"I'm gonna be a staaar!!! I'm gonna be a staar!! Yeah!!" Stephanie's voice was loud enough; the words can be heard several blocks away. And for the first time ever, her father smiled at the thought.

## Chapter 4

### Back then pt.3

Something inside Taeyeon felt lighter when it dawned upon her that they're on the same age, she trashed the idea of ever calling the other girl unnie, although she's very close to doing it moments ago.

It's a mystery how they were able to communicate given Stephanie's Hangeul is so horrible, it's funny. But somehow, they made it work, with Taeyeon relentlessly tutoring her while getting English tidbits for herself along the way.

*Oh this is going to be a long one*, Taeyeon thought. They gradually grew closer as the days went by, maybe it's because they're both very far from home compared to the other girls who can travel back and forth from the company to their houses at any given time they wished.

They automatically relied on each other, tied each other's promises of sticking together no matter what happens, and on the process, unconsciously binding their young hearts as well. They became instant parents, instant sisters, and instant best friends. Looking out and taking care of each other. Especially Taeyeon, she had this feeling of innate responsibility when it comes to Stephanie, like she must check on her from time to time, make sure that she doesn't get into any trouble and whatnot.

It may root from them being roommates, their young and naïve selves unaware of how they bared themselves to each other in a heartbeat and the large contrast of that to the reality of the industry that they set foot into.

Taeyeon's mostly the worried one, always disquieted about Stephanie's lack of knowledge in Korean culture which often ends up with the girl accidentally offending others. She carries that constant worry every day, together with the stress and pressure of being a trainee, doing your best, schooling and homesickness. But when she comes home to the dorm and hears Stephanie's comical attempt of greeting her in Hangeul in that usual booming voice, the load of burden lightens, and when Stephanie smiles that stupidly charming smile of hers, the corner of Taeyeon's mouth twitches and she stops for a moment, clandestinely inhales sharply, feels her toes coil inside her sneakers.

She wonders what's happening to her, all those unusual and unnecessary antics she does whenever the other girl is around but she pushes the thought aside and argues that Stephanie's eye smile is just one of a kind and that all the herculean torments of living everyday in that setting is somehow bearable, when she comes home to this...

She definitely thinks it's manageable.

She had friends in Jeonju, it's not much, neither is it measly. But the connection they had had never felt this deep and inexplicable unlike what she has with Stephanie and to think that they just met a few months ago. She finds herself studying the other girl sometimes, *most of the time*, just staring at her, looking, not really jealous of her appearance or whatever, she just wants to gaze at her for no apparent reason, which she thought was weird but went with it anyway.

Stephanie's long brown hair lined with tinges of blonde near the tips, round and slightly chunky cheeks, amazingly pointed nose and her eyes, those eyes are really something else. Those eyes are beyond doubt created by God or some divine power Taeyeon doesn't usually believe in.

She thinks that Stephanie is pretty.



Then again, Stephanie really is pretty.

The management had announced that they'll be debuting soon, Stephanie now included in the group. Taeyeon's eyes widened, feeling silent fireworks burst and pop inside of her. Stephanie hugs her tight, their bodies pressed together so hard there's no space for air left. Stephanie has her arms around Taeyeon's neck.

Taeyeon's heart dies a little and her brain starts buzzing, stops functioning. She feels stupid, immobile and unable to put her arms around Stephanie's lithe waist, fearing the tiny sparks of voltage that would electrocute her from top to toe.

But she thinks it's a nice way of being electrocuted, it feels nice, giddy even. She doesn't know what to call it so leaves it like that.

The room was loud with cheering but she could only hear muffled voices and her own heartbeat pounding like a bass drum, ringing and echoing in her red, hot ears as Stephanie continues to embrace her, gives one last squeeze before peeling off of her to mingle with the others and taking Taeyeon's breath along with her.

It was a long day with great news, though tired like most days, today, they were hopeful, somehow feeling that all their efforts are starting to pay off.

All cleansed and ready to call it a day, Taeyeon, with much delight, moans inwardly when her sore back hits the soft mattress, usually she'd assess herself before closing her eyes and slumbering, thinks of how her day went, the choices she made, dilemmas and the pros and cons of it, along with the other eight girls who managed to slowly yet stealthily creep their way into her heart, just think of them until she unconsciously falls asleep, but right now she could close her eyes and immediately drift off to dreamland.

That was the initial plan.

Until rustling of sheets were heard and she felt her bed dip, a warm body next to her, sees a blurred beautiful face from her peripheral, feels eyes on her.

She lies there motionless like a corpse, complete with the cold hands and feet.

The girl's raspy voice croaks in the hollowness of their room.

"Taetae..."

She'll never get tired of that little moniker Stephanie had given her, usually she hates being called such names, but this one's hard to resist.

She mustered up all the courage she needed before stirring to face the other girl.

"Hm?"

"I'm scared..."

"You should stop watching horror movies, you're just scaring yourself, fany-ah."

It rang in her head in a loop. *Fany-ah*

Breath running low now as Stephanie inches closer. Taeyeon feels Stephanie's breath fanning her cheeks, which are now probably flushed and flustered. Thank goodness, it's dim in there.

"I'm scared of my dream"

"What? Why?"

"Because it's about to come true"

"Shouldn't you be happy?"

"I am but... I mean, what if I fail? What if I'm not good enough, most of the people don't like me you know, they find me impolite"

Taeyeon felt her heart constrict upon hearing the words, she scooted closer, faces were mere inches away.

"You'll do fine, just be yourself; you won't go as far as where you are now if you aren't something fancy, don't worry about what others will say, everyone talks so let them, as long as you know you're doing the best you can, then you won't fail yourself. You can do this, we...can do this." She smiled at her.

Stephanie exhales thoroughly, her worried eyebrows now softened, her eyes, naked and soulful, boring into Taeyeon's dilated orbs.

She smiles at her.

“How do you know when to say the right words Taetae?” she asks and captures Taeyeon’s hand, slowly locks their fingers in a loose entanglement, Taeyeon’s breath hitches and her throat feels clogged, Stephanie’s hand is warm. She swallows down an invisible lump and stares at the girl yet again.

“Trust me fany, I have no idea either” she whispers but notices Stephanie’s chest heaving rhythmically, indicating that the girl had already fallen asleep.

Taeyeon looks at her for the longest time, tries to solve the puzzle but fails, shuts her eyes and forces herself to sleep but to no avail. Stephanie looks so peaceful when sleeping, she comments. She looks at their joined hands and then to the slumbering girl’s face and forgets the daily torments, upcoming events and more rigorous training, she forgets about the girl Sooyeon and Yejin.

Forgets everything else.

## Chapter 5

### Catching Up with an Old Friend

The night breeze has that extra feel of chill, making her shrug involuntarily like she's anxious about something which would be unusual because she's just at a small gathering with her long-time friends that she hasn't seen for ages and had missed oh so dearly.

It's quite amazing, she thinks, to have this kind of bond with people, to spend most of your teenage years with them and grow up together, gradually transforming from pimply run-of-the-mill teens into gorgeous women the world has its eyes on and yet feel like you're eighteen-year-olds having a slumber party, talking about hot people, nail polish and planning mischief.

She sighs, a happy one, as she looks at them from outside, arms crossed, placidly swaying a wine flute on one hand.

"So... marriage huh?" a girl beside her surmised, face impeccably flawless although most of the time she looks lethargic and stoic.

Tiffany nods away.

"That's one hell of a *plot twist*" the girl said, eyebrows creased and eyes unmoving, but there's a glint of something tender from the way she looked at the girl.

"Did you get that dig from a book or somewhere else?" Tiffany quipped, aiming facetiousness.

"The internet" the girl replied matter-of-factly.

Tiffany chuckled, "So I got married and you're techie Jessie all of a sudden?"

Jessica rolled her eyes and smiled. "You could say that", she quips, leans her back against the balcony's railings and crosses her feet. She glances at Tiffany, as if waiting for the latter to say something, but notices the girl zoning out, staring at nothing. Jessica's gaze diverted downcast.

A comfortable silence engulfed them for several blissful moments. Far-off voices, laughter, and chatters from the people inside hang in the still air along with the faint melody of some pop song of today's era.

"Are you sure about him?" Jessica asks out of nowhere, concern painted all over her fair face.

Tiffany sighs heavily. Everyone's been doing that, asking her stuffs about the two of them and a certain person, and she feels distressed, she feels being asked one plus one and her answer is three.

"Will you be okay later? I heard she's coming tonight"

"Why wouldn't I be?" She answers, feigning integrity, giving Jessica a hoax smile.

"Oh come on Tiff, what do you take me for? You seriously think I'd fall for that?"

Tiffany looks at her with despondent eyes seemingly ready to break down at given any moment. Her strong walls came crashing down in an instant. She's been struggling for far too long.

"I miss her Jess, I miss her a lot" she croaks.

"I know, so why'd you do it then?"

"I...I don't know, honestly, every night, I've been asking myself the same question, it's not like I'm regretting it or anything, it's just that.. I don't know, I don't know" she stuttered, taking a mouthful of wine, face contorting unpleasantly afterwards.

After living with someone for the longest period ever in your life, is it easily possible to suddenly detach yourself and start living on your own?

With a new person perhaps?

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Jessica looks at her emphatically. She had been there, in Tiffany's place.

Being young and confused, young and scared, young and unsure.

And now, still young but regretful.

"You shouldn't have done what I did" she utters. Tiffany nods her head slowly; eyes blank and sighs for the umpteenth time that day.

They all know the whole group that in the course of their adolescence there had been romantic tensions between members, they think it's pretty normal, fifteen or sixteen year olds living with other sixteen year olds that were equally beautiful and talented, it's hard not to admire some of them, and it's hard not to be admired back.

It's part of growing up, as they justify it.

Identity crisis. Am I straight? Am I gay? Do I like boys? Do I like girls? Together, they figured it out alongside some experimentation that thankfully has no videos whatsoever, cause if there is, then the fandom would probably be going insane by now and their fans would be killing themselves out of sheer happiness.

When those people see them hold hands or hug or do any kind of physical contact, immediately, smiles and squeals and blog posts would appear. But imagine if they saw the things they did back then with each other, all jaws would drop. Sooyoung had hinted it before on some TV show, that members had done things far greater than mediocre hugs and whatnot.

So while others have solved their puzzle, the remainder was left hanging. Either they were still unsure or in denial, others kept mum, like their leader. She doesn't voice out her thoughts much, she doesn't want to be a burden she says, but the others cajole her, Sunny especially. They want her to open up to them, because they've become a family and isn't that what family's all about?



The night is coming alive. 29 minutes had passed since Tiffany set foot into Sunny's new abode. Jessica turns around, rests her elbows on the balcony railings, clasps her hands together and blows hot breath onto it before staring into Seoul's night traffic.

"How has she been?" Tiffany asks, looking at Jessica.

"The usual, grumpy old lady, she immersed herself into music like always and did weird, harmless things after your wedding. But I can say that she's better now, I think..." Jessica answers, a small smile decorated her thin lipstick-clad lips.

"Really? That's good to hear"

"I'm a bit worried later though, when she comes"

"Why? Doesn't she know that I arrived in Seoul today?"

"I think she knows, and that's why I'm worried, I don't know what to expect."

Tiffany feels something bitter gnaw her insides; she decides to divert the topic.

"So tell me about yourself, what naughty things have you been doing while I was away huh?" Tiffany inquires a second later, biting back a floozy snort.

"Puh-lease Hwang, you know I'm very much well-behaved" she scoffs, shooting Tiffany a playful smirk.

"Well-behaved my ass" she spats back and snuggles closer to the girl, loops her arms around Jessica's. They stare at the dancing city lights together.

"You know, I think that even if I pursued her back then, all my efforts would be in vain" says Jessica.

"What do you mean?"

"I was so desperate to be in the 'rage' before, you know, couple pairings the fans love so much" she started.

Tiffany kept quiet, scooted closer to her for the air is starting to lose its mercy. She feels Jessica shudder, she then placed her chin on the latter's shoulder.

"So I did, and I thought Taeyeon would be perfect for me, I mean we do look cute together right? Plus, we go way back, we had mutual understanding."

Tiffany looked at her, an eyebrow raised and lips curved upwards.

"Oh don't be childish! I mean I just thought me and Taeyeon's pairing would be cute, so I went with it thinking that it would help the group's popularity and I somehow needed a distraction after

breaking up with Donghae. After that, it was Yuri since I kinda sensed that she was scared of me, it'd be easy."

"You manipulative bitch" the other commented.

They laugh.

"But then, I realized Taeyeon's fragile, that I somehow made a wrong move and it broke her, she wasn't used to this" Jessica points to herself and Tiffany, pertaining to their background of growing up in the States and being playful when it comes to matters of the heart.

"She was different after that, I can tell, she's too cautious, like she's walking on eggshells around me, enclosing herself in a protective cocoon when I'm in the room, avoids any interaction as far as possible. That was before though, and that was the worst, gradually I notice her trying to reach out awkwardly, that was the time you were her roommate, little by little and I tried my best to salvage whatever's left with us, and I was shocked that it left a mark to me too"

She swallows hard, feels her heart thump faster.

Her throat hurts for some reason.

"It was in the later stages of our debut that it dawned on me that I actually like Taeyeon, I like her, but was so blind before to actually see it, my mind was disoriented and clouded with tons of other stuff or maybe I was in denial, doesn't matter anymore though. And so, whenever I see you guys together I always think 'oh I could've had that, that could have been me'

I know it's petty and all that, being envious and jealous of you but for some strange reason, I got used to the feeling, of just watching you guys, though it sometimes hurt, okay, most of the time, I just...you just have that innate chemistry that even I, think that maybe, just maybe, Taeyeon and I didn't happen because you are bound to have her."

Tiffany's heart swelled with frank revelry, the confessions were heartfelt, and she was thankful to Jessica for that, but she can't help but feel a pang of guilt and pain, barreling through her beating organ, eating her inside out.

*At least Jessica was here to look after her when I wasn't around*

"Thanks Jessie, seriously" she breathes out shakily and Jessica thinks it's because of the cold; Tiffany pushes back the tears threatening to fall, silently second-motioning everything single thing Jessica had said. Tiffany saw things on the internet, about her and her best friend, and how Jessica would look so out of place, disappearing in the background, unable to have something that she's wanted for so long, or someone rather, Tiffany was thankful, that they were all open-minded and mature to accept these things, to be able to comprehend and not hold grudges against each other, so she was really, deeply grateful to Jessica.

"That's why it's a real waste, this, you guys together. A part of me should feel relief or something but I actually was heartbroken for the two of you, and I still am, you are such an inconvenience." she shakes her head, a 'tch' was heard later.

Of course, Jessica meant that gesture affectionately.

"I love you too" Tiffany says later.

Her phone vibrates, turns out it has been vibrating for several minutes now and she was just too preoccupied to notice it, too numb, she checks the caller id but does nothing.

"You should get that"

"Nah"

"He's probably worried"

"He knows where I am, he knows I'm safe" Tiffany answers back, face unchanged and downs the remaining wine in her flute. Jessica does the same.

"What about Yuri?" Tiffany asks out of the blue and totally irrelevant.

"Oh my, aren't you a nosy one, gosh"

"I have the right to know!"

"It was, I don't know, I think something's wrong with me, I don't know what I want, Yuri's like one of the best, she's definitely girlfriend material, plus she swings"

"How about you? Which way do you swing?"

"I have no idea, stop interrogating me about it, Yuri's happy now, she has unni, she treats her well, and they love each other. Good for the both of them"

"Oh yeah, the one who gave her a car?"

"And made her acting career blossom too, so all is well, except for you, that is" Jessica retorted, finally avenging herself from Tiffany's nonstop interrogation a while ago.

"Great quip" the other one admitted and it made Jessica grin saucily.

"What the hell are you two doing here and why the long faces? No one died and the party is inside, you're missing it out, get back in here quick, Taeng's near, she called me" Sunny spoke, her eyes widen for a moment, realizing it only after Jessica gave her a strange look.

"On second thought, Fany, take your time" she supplied further.

"No need Sunny, I'm a-okay, right Jessie?" the girl said as she gave both girls a fake smile before dragging Jessica by the arm and into the living room that was booming with music as Sooyoung and Yoona sang in a very unladylike manner while Yuri and Hyoyeon danced quirkily. Seohyun was admiring Sunkyu's interior design near the kitchen.

Little did she know, the two girls behind her looked at each other with disdain, pity reflecting on the duo's pair of brown orbs.

## Chapter 6

### Musings of a Hopeful Heart

"Unni.."

The girl below mumbles and squirms.

Soft kisses land on her neck just below her ear and the feeling was marvelous. She held her in place as the girl above starts to deliciously yet slowly rock her body against hers.

"Mhmm?"

"We...s-should go" as much as she wanted to continue this little endeavor, she had to fight the feeling or else, her beloved would be chopped into pieces by their friend.

"We'll be late and...mhmm, and S-unny unni will..hah.." words ceased as her lips were captured into a fierce kiss.

The younger girl pinned on the bed slipped her smooth hands inside Taeyeon's shirt and wrapped them around her bare waist.

That made Taeyeon stop her ministrations, anticipating the start of round four.

"Unni, stop" the girl said, making Taeyeon pout a little.

She laughed and kissed those lips one last time.

"Later, I promise"

With a sigh, Taeyeon reluctantly detached herself from the girl.

"Don't sulk, please?" Taeyeon heard, a hand circling her wrist.

She smiled and gave the younger girl a peck.

"Later" she mumbled into the kiss.

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"Are you ready? Forget anything? Say it now and not later when we're five minutes before entering a party" Taeyeon says to her.

The girl gives her a disapproving look and Taeyeon laughs at her scowl.

Their meeting was very unexpected, random if you may. Taeyeon just left the entertainment building and it was a little early to go home so she opted to canvass for new pastels in an old art supply shop since her old one's already tattered and had grown so short she could barely use it, when suddenly a girl comes up to her and strikes a conversation.

She was oddly familiar.

Time does things to one's face.

She's really pretty; she's prettier today than yesterday.

But definitely not the prettiest girl Taeyeon ever saw, she had seen that person. She had lived with her and loved her to the deepest depths of the ocean, to the highest portion of the sky the clouds could touch, even deeper than 6 feet under.

She set the thought aside.

Today, the world hates her, she concludes. She wished she was sick, or injured or anything that would suffice as a plausible excuse not to go to Sunkyu's stupid house-warming party.

She would happily go though, knowing that she'd see her friends turned sisters again, they used to have gatherings every now and then when everyone's schedule is flawless, but tonight, there's an addition.

An addition which subtracted a lot of things from her.

An addition she's not sure if she's ready to see.



The wound isn't fresh anymore but it's still there, healing ever so slowly, much to her dismay, and will probably leave her a scar as a constant reminder of someone she wanted so badly yet cannot attain.

What a load of bull, she thought.

Sunkyu called her days ago of the said party but warned her that 'she' will finally be back in town. Just the name gives her combustion chills clobbering her spines and sending a nauseous, droning sound to her brain.

*Tiffany*

After all the misery she's been through, the name still rings beautifully in her ears, echoes in her brain, sometimes she thinks, as cheesy as it may seem, that her heart beats the name itself.

*Tif-fa-ny*

She scoffs at the thought.

"Hey, everything okay?" A voice reverberated inside her car, breaking her reverie.

"Huh? Yeah, just thinking..."

"About?" the girl pried.

Taeyeon bit the inside of her cheek, gripped the wheel with unnecessary pressure and tried to think of a good slip as fast as she can.

"Of what... present we should give to Sunkyu"

"Hmm, good question, do you know her favorite brand of wine?"

Taeyeon mentally shook her head, recollecting herself. Funny, how a person could leave her quivering, bewildered with muddled thoughts.

"Oh wait! I think...I think we should get her champagne instead! We're in for some celebration after all, right unni?" she beamed. The same innocent, round eyes staring back at her.

She smiled back halfheartedly, the feeling was rather lacking.

She felt sorry for the girl; she'll never have the entirety of Taeyeon's heart.

"Champagne it is"

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They were now approaching Sunkyu's residence hand in hand. Taeyeon tries to push away the nervousness, anxiety, excitement and longing by holding the young girl's hand tighter.

The girl notices it but keeps it to herself, in the seemingly soundproof and hollow confines of her chest; she heard her heart crack a little. She gave Taeyeon a tight smile.

"You give this to her" Taeyeon passes the champagne bottle to her.

"Oh darn! We forgot to wrap it unni!"

"That won't be necessary" Taeyeon frowns but the girl already fled back to the car.

"Just a ribbon, I swear unni, you go ahead, I'll be right up" she somewhat shouted.

"No. I'll wait for you right here"

Taeyeon's phone beeped, displaying the name of the young girl.

"Don't be stubborn now unni, go, go. I'll be there in a jiffy"

She half-smiled, half-scoffed at it, she very much appreciates the girl's effort in pleasing not only her, but also her friends. She looked at the girl before surrendering her hands up in the air.

The tension was evidently making the both of them uneasy, though neither admitted it. But is admission still needed when everything's already open and shut?

It wasn't brand new information that Taeyeon's heart already belonged to someone else that wasn't, isn't and will never be her. But she had loved Taeyeon before so having her now, though physically, isn't that bad, or so she thought.

Maybe they can have a fresh start this time, given their history. It's just a matter of catching up and being more expressive, bolder, more adventurous and that's what she does, keeping Taeyeon distracted and silently hoping that the wholeness of Taeyeon's affection would be redirected back to her, just like the old days.

It was quite peaceful back then when it was just the two of them, when she was trying her best everyday to help Taeyeon overcome the massive heartbreak she was in, she even thought for a delusional moment that when they lay in bed panting and sweating, it was her name Taeyeon calls for.

And here she thought they had come a long way.

She smiles drearily.

Turns out, just a single phone call would bring her torpedoing back to square one.

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"Hey unni" she says, pecking Taeyeon's cheek while cradling grocery bags in her arms.

No response.

"It was freezing cold today" she says again, still oblivious to Taeyeon's somewhat stunned state.

"Unni?" she coos, drops the grocery bags on the countertop and sits across Taeyeon, leans forward and cups her cheeks.

Taeyeon snaps out of it.

"Huh? What? Sorry I was..."

"Shh, it's okay..." she purrs, leans further and kisses a pair of frozen lips.

Lips that immediately pulled back.

Now she's worried

Her hands motioned for Taeyeon's, giving it a firm hold.

"Everything alright?"

It took a few seconds for the other girl to respond.

"Y-yeah, Sunkyu just called..."

"Really? What did she say?" she asked with a smile.

"...Tiffany's back in Seoul"

Her face fell

"Oh"

## Chapter 7

### **She never thought parties were so cumbersome**

Her palms were sweaty.

Very sweaty.

The animated surroundings seemed mute to her ears as she could only hear the frantic thrumming of her heart in synch with the mild yet growing throb in her head. She huffed for the umpteenth time that night, as if huffing would lessen the nervousness brimming inside of her.

She could feel a headache about to kick in.

She thinks of possible ways to escape this sticky situation. When Sunkyu told her that Tiffany's back in town, she grew restless, in her idle times, it's all she could think about. What's the proper way of greeting her again? Should we hug or just give a small nod or maybe I should just bury myself alive, she thinks as she presses a certain button on the elevator and hopes that the other girl left behind would move faster so she won't have to face it alone.

Coward. She says to herself but quickly takes it back.

No, I'm not the coward one. It's you.

Each step seemed heavy, as if she's walking with metal weights clasped on her ankles. It was like a death sentence, the doomed destination is where she will die.

Two years.

Two long years of misery and here she is, about to see the cause of all those. It was one of the most nerve-racking situations she's been in, she had barely made it alive after the infamous ditch, she actually thought it'd be possible to die of excessive heartache.

They were on constant watch by the public, their fans especially. She and Tiffany were pretty famous and a good portion of their fans already deemed that they have been dating for years, although that was somehow true.

She had analyzed it long before, when she was still in the stages of questioning her own feelings and trying to decode Tiffany's. Looking back, she herself, would find it skeptical.

The things she had done with Tiffany.

Maybe the other people were wrong about calling their couple pairing fans delusional. Because she thought that she herself, seriously doesn't know how she could look at the two of them and their interactions and say they're just best friends. I mean, constantly stealing glances at your best friend and blushing when they notice isn't exactly the behavior of someone who thinks of their best friend as just a friend.

Right?

Not to mention the never ending stare down, like they're seeing right through each other's soul, the subtle hand gestures whenever they're standing next to each other or even sitting, their bodies would always automatically find a way to link the both of them.

Like magnets.

And neither found it awkward. It's second nature to them, like drinking water when you're thirsty or sleeping when you're tired. They had built an invisible bubble around themselves so powerful that when someone steps in, the bubble wouldn't pop and that person would only go unnoticed.

Maybe it's their bond long ago. When Tiffany was still 15 and she's also 15, both far away from home, disoriented teenagers trying to juggle chasing their dreams and schooling and all the other stuffs going on in their hectic lives.

Their bond was their safe haven.

It is their safety net, a source of relaxation.

A breath of fresh air.

For them, being with each other feels like coming home.

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It was sometime in 2010 that their friendship/relationship or what they may call it, if ever they labeled it, had blurred. Another idol, a male one, was rumored to have set his eyes on Tiffany. Taeyeon thought long and hard about that, if there really is something more, Tiffany is quite the social butterfly of the group so it may be just be genuine friendship since that idol has been training with them from the start, with a different company though.

All her speculations crumbled down and she was left with a bitter taste in her mouth when one night, in the darkness of her room, a figure crept in and snaked its arms around her waist.

The warmth was familiar. She smiled.

"Tae..."

"Hmm?"

"Did I wake you?"

Taeyeon chuckled.

"Obviously" She faced Tiffany, still with a smile on her face, and was met with a concerned pair of orbs.

"Sorry" the other one mumbled.

"No big, can't sleep anyway, just tossing and turning"

"Something wrong?" Taeyeon hugged back, arms wrapped loosely around Tiffany's torso. She heard a deep inhale.

"You know me and..."

Taeyeon kept mum, waiting for the other girl to continue but minutes later found the silence less bearable.

"You and..? You and who? Jessi? What did she do this time?"

"No, no,no. It isn't about Jessi or any of the girls..."

"Then who? Manager oppa?"

Tiffany shook her head; something tells Taeyeon that this is a serious matter. She braced herself for whatever that is, and hoped that it isn't what she was thinking.

"Him"

The word didn't register at first. It took her a handful of minutes to finally process who the topic of their random conversation was. Although she had anticipated this, that Tiffany would clear this to her, but from the looks of it, it's more of a confession.

Her heart thumped deeply.

"I think I... I think I want to try this with him" Tiffany finally said, more like exhaled. Like a thick thorn was finally removed from her throat.

That same thorn instantly punctured Taeyeon in the heart. She immediately tore her hands away from her.

"Hey, hey..." Tiffany cooed, grabbing Taeyeon's arms back and placing them on her waist and held them tight, Taeyeon couldn't look at her anymore.

Her face turned serious, eyes ever so attentive, trying to study the other girl's reaction.

Too bad the room was too dark.

She panicked.

"Hey, Taeyeon-ah, look at me please..."

"Why are you saying this to me?" Taeyeon's voice resonated in the room. It was so beautiful, but it was so broken at the same time.



"This? I just, I don't want you to get shocked, and of course you have to know, you're my best friend, silly" she said, attempting to lighten the mood.

Of course it wouldn't work though.

"Okay, I get it, thanks for telling me, you can go now" Taeyeon said, robotically, eyes focused anywhere but Tiffany, her eyes are starting to sting. She closed them.

"Nothing's going to change, I promise. I'll still be here for you, I'll never go, I just want to... you know, to clear my head"

"Clear your head of what exactly?" Taeyeon snapped, seemingly empowered and now brimming with determination. If Tiffany's ashamed to tell it to others then she should at least tell it straight to Taeyeon's face, it's not like they both didn't know what was going on the whole time, they know, they can feel it, they can see it reflecting from each other's eyes.

Taeyeon's not good with voicing out her emotions and Tiffany wasn't one to pry, especially to Taeyeon. She's always so patient with Taeyeon's timidity and reserved demeanor. Always careful around her, Taeyeon means a lot, she loves her a lot. But this whole untold feeling of whatsoever is killing her.

She wanted something tangible.

She can't date a member, can she? I mean, what would Korea think?

Two members of the country's national girl group dating each other?

What would their fans think? To international fans, it'd be a dream come true but what about the others?

The little girls and teenage girls? They're supposed to be admired and looked up to, that's what idols are and not a bad influence.

What if the company terminates their contract? She'll only break her and Taeyeon's future. And besides, she's not so sure of herself. If this feeling she has was for the long run or it can be just a spur of the moment or just deep admiration.

She doesn't know and she doesn't want to know, at least for now. She could still have Taeyeon around and have him at the same time. So there's no problem right?

That's what she thought.

But after that night, it was never the same, and she knew, there's something inside Taeyeon she had broken.

"I'm tired, I want to sleep" was all Taeyeon said, ending their conversation.

"Taeyeon-ah, please don't do this, please don't"

No answer

Both of them hardly got any sleep that night and the next morning, she felt all guilt rush in. Taeyeon's nose was a bit red and she was wearing wayfarers, the girl went out with Sunny somewhere.

While Sunny made it home around 10pm, the other one didn't.

Tiffany waited until 2 in the morning before giving up and spending another sleepless night.

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She heard a faint ding, and noticed that she had unconsciously pressed the doorbell while zoning out. She wanted to buy herself time but she did the exact opposite. She silently cursed herself.

It made her realize how alive she was, it's so funny she wanted to laugh. After everything that happened, she thought, as cliché and emotional as it may sound, that she was numb from everything, that she had gone through so much her heart's used to the feeling, but it isn't. It never will be.

Tiffany's effect on her is really something else.

She could feel herself boiling up with mixed emotions. Anger, angst, joy, longing, nervousness, happiness, and love being the most powerful. She couldn't relax, she feels like peeing on the spot, bursting into a firework, or suddenly ditching Sunny's ridiculous party.

From outside, she confirmed that the party must be outrageous.

And when the doors opened, it indeed was.

Music was blaring from Sunny's high-end stereos, as she welcomed Taeyeon into a snuggly hug while mumbling something that sounded like 'fellow midget' and 'glad you could come'

Taeyeon scowled at the girl, her face lit up when she saw Yuri in the background about to make a mad dash towards her.

"Taengoo!"

She was being smothered by Yuri followed by Yoona and then Sooyoung. She felt so small being surrounded by three ginormous buildings and hated it.

"I told you to drink your binggrae!"

"Unni, how are you?! Your height hasn't changed one bit! But I like your hair though, and it smells nice too" Yoona commented and took a whiff off of Taeyeon's head.

But Taeyeon was happy, she really is. It brought her immediate comfort, just being with these people she considered family.

"Is this your way of saying you miss me?" she asked, fixing her hair along with her jacket that had become shabby, thanks to the trio's lubberly hands.

Sunny's touch and stare made her aware of the previous dilemma she's been thinking.

"Are you going to be fine? Do you want me to come with you?" she asked her.

Taeyeon went silent, Sunkyu held her hand.

It was shockingly cold. The girl tightened her hold.

"I'll be fine and don't be silly, this is your house, you can do what you want to"

"You know exactly that that's not what I meant" Sunkyu isn't buying any of her acts.

"I have to, this will happen eventually so let's just get this over with once and for all"

Sunkyu studied her for a long time, before letting go.

"Okay, she's at the balcony"

Taeyeon could only nod.

## Chapter 8

### And The Much Awaited Reunion (only to be spoilt)

She kept shivering underneath her leather jacket and couldn't comprehend why, once is normal because it's kind of chilly anyway. Twice is understandable because sometimes people just shudder randomly, and thrice is suspicious, there must be something wrong with her.

She kept shivering.

Excitement. That must be it, she thought. She's excited, scared, anxious, nervous, and she feels very stupid surrendering to these feelings.

What would she do again?

Give her a hug? *It'll be fine if she doesn't hug back.*

Give her a friendly cheek to cheek? *What if the girl steps back?*

Okay, I think that's too extreme given the circumstances.

"She's here"

So should I just what? Stand there and do nothing?

"Tiffany"

Oh yeah, silly, of course I'd smile, she always likes it when I smile. Okay, smile. I will smile.

"Miyoung!"

"Huh?"

"Taeyeon. She's here" Jessica said, looking at the girl and then back to Tiffany, her eyes were somewhat worried.

Tiffany felt her whole body go cold, felt the urge to run, felt goose bumps rise from her skin. Felt the adrenaline surge in like a mad tidal wave, and she thought of how Taeyeon's voice sounds like again, hearing it personally or if Taeyeon changed her hair, or her perfume.

The fact that Taeyeon was actually with someone tonight officially flew out from the windows of her mind.

It amazed her that she could still think straight as walked forward and opened the sliding door and into the living room, with Jessica tailing her attentively.

Jessica and Sunny exchanged stares.

A circle of boisterous people gathered near the kitchen, none of them was seated, still engrossed into catching up and doing crazy stunts.

Juhyun has her arms around Taeyeon's minute shoulders, engulfing the latter into a side-hug while Yuri and Yoona chatted in front of them about some incident that happened on one of their drama series.

"And he was like flailing his arms around like this, Oh my, it was so funny!" Yoona demonstrated and everyone was all smiles, even Sooyoung and Hyoyeon who were arguing a second ago about how to properly use a bread knife magically forgot about their little quarrel and laughed along with the group.

Yoona did a double take before suspending her actions mid-air, all heads turned to a certain direction and there they were.

Or for Taeyeon, there she was; in her usual blinding glory that made her go crazy just by looking at her.

Her breath hitched and by reflex, she clutched her hands tight.

*She's still so beautiful.*

Taeyeon felt her body go numb, like thousands of needles are poking it to no end. She doesn't know what to do, she's just staring at her, and she's just staring back.

The tension was thick; everyone in the room can possibly feel it.

The awkwardness.

It was not long before Sooyoung cleared her throat and proceeded to chat along with the others as if nothing happened, but not before giving Tiffany a meaningful look and it reminded the latter of their heartwarming conversation a while ago.

It was Tiffany who made the first move, walking ahead to greet the other one. A few steps here and there, she never broke the eye contact.

When she reached her, with just a little space between them, she could feel Taeyeon tensing, just like her. But the latter's scent didn't go unnoticed.

Sometimes when people smell a specific fragrance, it reminds them of something that happened in the past, like they're being teleported back to it, back to the same place with the same person with the same old feelings.

Tiffany was feeling nostalgic.

Taeyeon kept fidgeting with her hands, an obvious sign of being uneasy. She was playing the hem of her shirt and stupidly waiting, she wanted to be the first one who talks so it would appear that she had been well, that she had moved on from her but her voice was lost.

Kim Taeyeon was unable to use her voice.

"Hi..." Tiffany spoke, her hands were sweating and she was having a hard time keeping her voice straight.

Taeyeon wanted to close her eyes and just revel at the sweet sound of that voice she hasn't heard for years. The old hoarse and raspy but oh so beautiful voice of Tiffany tickling her ears.

And stoked the gentle flame burning inside her chest.

Tiffany was always assertive; she was always one step ahead of her when she wanted something from Taeyeon. And before Taeyeon could snap back to reality, Tiffany was again advancing towards her.

If she could only yank her closer and hug her to no end right now that would be so much better but she's so stunned by Tiffany's mere presence that she couldn't move, and the only thing she was aware of was the terrible and loud beating of her heart and Tiffany's fragrance, how Tiffany's hair flowed down like a river of ebony along the length of her shoulders, how Tiffany's dress looked gorgeous on her, how red her lips were, if they were still soft and moist like the last time she had kissed them, and Tiffany. Tiffany. Everything about Tiffany.

Her head was spinning from this overwhelming feeling consuming her inside out, Tiffany had that smile on her face, that stupid smile Taeyeon couldn't help but fall for, the girl was coming closer and closer. It was maddening, like some disease she caught when she was fifteen and was unable to heal from then on.

Tiffany to Taeyeon was within arms' reach and Taeyeon's arms were ready, so ready for the long due embrace, the same warm embrace they used to have, the feeling of her hands on



Tiffany's lithe waist and the other girl's arms around her shoulders, everything would've went smoothly when suddenly the doorbell rang and from the intercom a face of a beautiful young girl showed.

Sunny galloped along like the kid she is and in stepped the last guest for that night's party.

Tiffany froze and reluctantly retreated a few steps back, obviously disappointed somewhat pissed off as she wondered who could be that person when all of them are already present inside the house.

She was so near to hugging Taeyeon.

So near.

"Everyone, sorry I'm a bit late; we forgot to wrap this up. Unni, for you" the girl said and handed Sunkyu a bottle of champagne, a vibrant smile was plastered on her face.

Everyone inside the room did a chorus of Hi's and Hello's when they recognized who the girl was. They were shocked but none of their shock could compare to Tiffany's shock.

'We?'

The girl stood beside Taeyeon and what Tiffany saw made her heart clench.

The girl held Taeyeon's hand and slowly interlaced their fingers. Taeyeon smiled at the girl jovially. The happiness was sincere and Tiffany saw that, it made her feel something that she didn't like.

Tonight reminded Taeyeon of those drunken nights she had, not knowing whether this was all true or just games her mind invents, and having to experience that hopeless feeling of being in love with her best friend yet having to stand beside someone she actually cares for.

It was weird because tonight, she knows she's one hundred percent sober.

"Hi unni, it's been a long time, it's nice to see you again" The girl spoke sincerely.

Lips curved into a smile.

"H-hi, nice to see you too, Yejin-ah" Tiffany answered, face stern and eyes fixed on Taeyeon.

## Chapter 9

### Bringing On the Heat

Everything's moving way too fast for Taeyeon.

One second ago, she was near to hugging Tiffany and then a sudden commotion occurred then her hand was trapped between Yejin's palm before she gets pulled away and into the living room, her eyes didn't fail to see Tiffany's befuddled expression, her face was an abstract piece of multiple emotions.

Shock, puzzlement, wonder, and for a second there, Taeyeon swear she could she hurt in those eyes.

Tiffany gave them a tight smile then bit her lip when Yejin turned around and dragged a frozen Taeyeon into the living room. She inhaled a deep one, closed her eyes and went to the kitchen.

She needs something stronger than boring old wine to get her through the night.

She grabbed a cold bottle of vodka resting inside Sunkyu's chrome fridge and poured herself a generous amount of it.

She was shaking; her knees were suddenly weak, like they've been beaten by a baseball bat again and again.

If it weren't for the warm touch she felt on her shoulder, she would've done something stupid like snatching Taeyeon away and bringing her someplace where they could be alone or sit beside Taeyeon or on Taeyeon's lap or in between Taeyeon and Yejin.

*It might not be the right time  
I might not be the right one  
But there's something about us, I want to say  
'Cause there's something between us anyway*

It had never occurred to her before, maybe because she was too used to it that she didn't find the time to actually think about it but she somehow considered Taeyeon hers. Being away from her close friends, Taeyeon included, for two years wasn't as easy as one two three, her decision about getting married was something heavy hence it had taken most of her time, time with the wedding planner, the florist, the venue organizers, her family, her husband's family, her husband.

She wondered how hard it must have been for Taeyeon, the fact that they couldn't see each other and especially the fact the she's getting married.

Getting married.

Married.

Past tense.

She's not going to lie, it was damn hard for her too. Her emotions were killing her, sometimes she would think that it's better not to get married and just stay in a relationship, at least in that way she could still live with Taeyeon and live life as it is but no, her rash and moronic feelings just had to push and pull herself away and towards Taeyeon, Other times, she would feel very content and at peace with the guy.

It's confusing the hell out of her.

Now she thinks it's her impulsiveness she followed because judging from what she's feeling right now, this isn't where her heart wants her to be. She wonders if she might not have thought this through thoroughly, she's always so meticulous of things, so this was kind of surprising.

Maybe she panicked or something. Then again, is there anything she could do to fix this? Or if there is something to fix. Marriage isn't a joke and she knows that.

But looking at Taeyeon now, who changed her seat and was now sitting on the opposite of the couch, with her beautiful face on display, Tiffany thinks that maybe she made the biggest mistake in her life.

It was ridiculously funny, it seems like Taeyeon, who was from Korea, was taking whatever's going on between them more seriously than she, Tiffany Hwang does, who grew up in a free country that sees homosexuality as something normal.

It wasn't that she thinks it's abnormal, she totally fine with it.

It's just a matter of strict religion and aiming to have a perfect family, with kids and a father they could call 'Daddy' and all that, much like her family back in the days.

And so, seeing Taeyeon in front of her with a very amused Yejin sitting very close to her, almost cuddling and looking very happy with whatever Hyoyeon's talking about started to carve its way into her heart.

And carving can never be not painful.

*I might not be the right one  
It might not be the right time  
But there's something about us I've got to do  
Some kind of secret I will share with you*

She could see it now as she ran a hand through her hair and sighed.

"So everything's not okay I assume?" the blonde girl surmised. Tiffany didn't answer. Her thoughts were muddled and unorganized.

Jessica helped herself with some vodka, downed her first shot, face scrunching just a little at the taste, and poured Tiffany her second.

From there they could see the happenings in the living room. Sunkyu, Hyoyeon and Juhyun were talking to Yejin who was sitting beside an uncomfortable Taeyeon who was chancing a glance on them through a wall mirror.

Tiffany caught her stare and Taeyeon immediately tore her eyes off of her looking guilty and flushed.

Cute. Tiffany thought. there was a one second smile on her face before it turned back to its previous stern and stoic look.

Sooyoung was making her way towards them.

"Shouldn't this be a party? Why are you guys over here?" she said jubilantly, but after a second her energy died.

"Okay, I get it, it's too awkward to be there and pretend that everyone's having fun blah blah" she rambled and sat one of the elevated stools, she grabbed a piece of garlic bread from a plate set down by Sunkyu as a finger food even before the party started while Jessica placed a flute filled with wine in front of her.

"Thanks, gosh, is there anything else here that's more exciting than garlic bread?" Sooyoung questioned later after gulping down her drink.

"You can rummage inside, I think." Jessica commented, pointed her thumb behind her, where Sunkyu's fridge was located.

Sooyoung's attempt to liven up the mood failed miserably. She half-slouched on her seat and sighed before standing up and doing what Jessica had said. Yuri who just got out from the powder room came beaming at them.

Jessica stiffened.

"Hello ladies" she greeted with a charming smile.

"She has gone mute since they arrived" Jessica explained, lips pursed toward Taeyeon and Yejin.

Yuri made an audible 'aww' and proceeded to Tiffany, kissing the top of the girl's head.

Tiffany still hasn't moved an inch nor talked a word, but she patted Yuri's legs for acknowledgment. Yuri then stood behind Jessica and placed her arms around the latter's shoulders; her chin was resting on the crown of Jessica's head.

Jessica leaned back and let herself fall on Yuri's front, and held Yuri's arms with one of her hands. She smiled, this is the closest I could ever get to you, she thought. Yuri hugged her tighter.

"She did say that she was bringing someone along right?" asked Jessica to no one, but Sooyoung was considerate enough to answer it with a small 'yep'.

"Maybe you'll find time later, we'll keep her busy, Yejin, I mean." said Sooyoung, her words were obviously aimed at Tiffany who was still staring hard at Taeyeon as she sat back to her place, but not without playfully shoving Yuri away.



Slowly nodding, Tiffany brought the glass near her mouth; her lips were gently touching the lid as she looked fervently at Taeyeon, who looked back at her with an unreadable expression she was so curious to know.

It seems like Taeyeon was brave when she's far away, having managed to stare back at Tiffany for close to a minute now. Then again, it was second nature to them, to look at each other for no apparent reason, wherein they sometimes get too lost in each other's orbs, silently guessing if the other one's feeling the same way, it's been like that before, until their eyes drowsily flutter and droop lazily, the members would just see them sound asleep beside each other.

Taeyeon feels like it has something to do with force, a force that keeps pulling her right from the start, she wanted so badly to look elsewhere, but she can't or maybe she doesn't want to. She hasn't seen her for two years. Her eyes wanted to take in as much as it could, to engrave Tiffany on her mind, just like all the other Tiffany's it had engraved ever since.

There was a 15 year old Tiffany rehearsing difficult dance choreography, also a sleeping Tiffany. Tiffany at 18 years old, beauty becoming more evident, Tiffany at 21 years old, seemingly looking like an irresistible sex goddess, Tiffany at 24, looking at Taeyeon like she's her favorite thing in the world before she held Taeyeon's face firmly and kissed the life out of her.

The force is getting stronger. Taeyeon couldn't help herself. She mentally thanked Hyoyeon and Yoona for keeping Yejin busy right now, because it would be very painful for the girl to see what she's doing right now.

Shamelessly gawking at another woman.

But Tiffany isn't just some other woman.

She was Taeyeon's first love.

And though it wasn't really proclaimed for everyone to know, she was the best Taeyeon has ever had.

Tiffany had that look in her eyes; she's a fine seductress alright. If her eyes could burn, it would burn the air, it would burn Yejin, it would probably burn Sunkyu's new house. It was that intense. It might burn Taeyeon too, but she wouldn't mind.

It was the same stare Tiffany had when they shared their first kiss which almost lead to something more deliciously serious. It didn't happen immediately though, they were both careful and didn't want to screw up their friendship, or just rashly screw, literally.

For them, it wasn't the pleasure they're after.

Tiffany slowly brought the glass to her mouth, her red lipstick imprinting her sexy lips on the glass. She slowly sipped her vodka while looking at Taeyeon dead in the eye, she never missed a second, never missed a single action like the way Taeyeon slowly scoots further away from Yejin and into her own personal space without the other girl knowing, how Taeyeon would wet her lips from time to time and she thought that maybe, the taste of Taeyeon's lips hasn't changed.

*I need you more than anything in my life  
I want you more than anything in my life*

*I'll miss you more than anyone in my life  
I love you more than anyone in my life*

There is no way of finding out, is there?

Sooyoung finally entered the scene, chatting amicably and never-endingly to Yejin, buying the two some time to hit a proper timing and finally get the chance to catch up.

Tiffany drank the rest of her cocktail, closing her eyes for a moment when she reached the top and letting the vodka burn its way down her throat, she forcefully planked down her glass on the marble countertop and it landed with a resounding clink. She bit her lip, tasting the dregs of alcohol left on it before she stood up, sauntering towards Taeyeon, her hips professedly hypnotizing as it swayed here and there, her heels clanking rhythmically against the floor.

Her face was serious but it was dazzling, her mouth twitched and there was now a small smile sketched on her smooth face. She wanted to run, just like the old times, run towards Taeyeon, hug her and feel the safety, the comforting familiarity the girl brought, hold her hand and drag her around like they're little kids.

But this was their first meeting after a long time; she wanted it to be different. She wanted every second, every minute to be worthwhile; she wanted to savor every feeling, all the yearning and hurt and regret and happiness and...and love.

The nearer she got, the faster her heart pounded, but she set the thought and anxiety away and smiled. The smile that captured the world's heart, it seemed to work, along with her curved eyes, a small curve on Taeyeon's mouth started to appear.

Taeyeon got up clumsily and just stood there, waiting.

Taeyeon, though broken, was always waiting, always hoping that maybe some crazy fate would grant her a miracle. A second chance and maybe...

Maybe this was the start of it.

## Chapter 10

### Caught in the middle

Everything was familiar; she knows it because she has felt this a thousand times ago. The flutters she feels in her heart, the wild churning of her stomach and Tiffany's mere presence. All of those combined seemed to toss her into a whirlpool of blissful suffocation.

She couldn't believe she managed to go on without Tiffany for two years, something she had deemed impossible to do so before. It just proves that the human heart does outstanding things after being shattered into pieces.

She had a firm grip on her glass, as if it would help her calm down. Peering into the swirling amber liquid, she smiled and realized that no amount of liquor could fix this, no one could fix this save for the person who broke it in the first place.

The person beside her.

The person wearing a brand new diamond ring.

She smiled to herself, sad and sarcastic. Defeat crept in like a vine tied around her throat. It's true, it's real. She's really married.

Taeyeon sighed unknowingly and stiffened the next second when felt eyes were on her and Tiffany started inching closer. Shoulder to shoulder now, Taeyeon had to take a mouthful of

whatever liquor she's drinking. It burned its way down her throat but it didn't calm the frantic beating of her heart, the sweating of her hands and the thoughts that run through her mind.

It was intoxicating, and she wasn't even talking about the alcohol.

*Hello boy it's been a while*  
*Guess you'll be glad to know*  
*That I've learned how to laugh and smile*  
*Getting over you was slow*  
*They say old lovers can be good friends*  
*But I never thought I'd really see you*  
*I'd really see you again*

The moment they stepped out of the living room and into the balcony, Tiffany never let her eyes off of Taeyeon though the latter wasn't looking back. Tiffany understands why, she's the only one who could fully understand Taeyeon's reserved demeanor.

She noticed Taeyeon look down on her glass and the amount of loneliness she saw in those eyes broke her heart, knowing that she was the reason behind that only made it worse. If she could just hug Taeyeon with all her might right now, she would but it's been two long years and maybe Taeyeon has changed, maybe this wasn't the old Taeyeon she knew.

The selfless Taeyeon that loves her unconditionally may be gone.

And it was her fault.

For being such a coward.

Tiffany approached her with caution, testing the waters. There was five second stiffness between them before their bodies relaxed, arms and shoulders touching.

“You cold?” Taeyeon asked a minute later.

Tiffany had to smile. *She’s concerned*

“Yeah, it’s kinda chilly”

“Oh... here” Taeyeon instantly broke off the close distance and proceeded to remove the cardigan she was wearing but Tiffany pulled her back.

“No, no, no let’s just...stay this way” she whispered into the air.

“O-okay...”

Taeyeon felt like a scolded puppy and wished for an insect repellant to drive away the butterflies in her stomach now that Tiffany's arms are looped around hers.

She came to realize that there was nothing else more beautiful than this, to have Tiffany beside her sharing each other's warmth and immersed in the comforting familiarity they seem to only find within each other.

Tiffany was very beautiful.

She was so beautiful right from the start.

The kind of beauty she possessed made people cry, but for Taeyeon, the wholeness of Tiffany drove her insane.

With each passing second, Taeyeon found herself unable to look away. No, she wouldn't miss this for the world. How could she look elsewhere when Tiffany's hair looked so feverishly rapturous as it danced gracefully to the tune of the wind, her ever mesmerizing eyes stared off into the flickering city lights ahead with peaceful tranquility and lucid contentment, even her apple red lips never lost its poisonous appeal.

Taeyeon was more than willing to take a bite, even if it costs her her life.

She blinked several times, almost moronically when Tiffany laid eyes on her til the familiar crescents showed up. Taeyeon smiled a real smile for the first time that night, her whole world came whirling in reverse and she found herself on the same spot where she had fallen head over heels for her best friend.



*I go crazy*  
*When I look in your eyes*  
*I still go crazy*  
*No my heart just can't hide that old feeling inside*  
*Way deep down inside*  
*Oh baby you know when I look in your eyes*  
*I go crazy*

“Ahjumma” Tiffany teasingly scoffed.

Taeyeon made an offended look before playfully shoving Tiffany, the sound of her raspy laughter filled the air and Taeyeon couldn't help but laugh along. Their laughter subsided as the now normal silence seeped back in. This happiness was nothing like the happiness she gets when watching early morning cartoons or reading through their group chat's silly conversations, this one was heartfelt happiness.

The kind of happiness only Tiffany could bring.

She turns to her the exact time Tiffany leans her head on Taeyeon's shoulder. It doesn't help that the girls inside had grown quiet and started singing a slow ballad. Tiffany's hand made its way to Taeyeon's and there she idly played with the latter's palm before carefully lacing their fingers.

It fit perfectly. They both thought and wondered if the other had noticed it too.

Taeyeon closed her eyes and pressed her face closer to Tiffany's head, recognizing the scent of Tiffany's brand of shampoo, perfume, lotion and whatnot.

Some things never change huh?

Except for us, she thought.

A slight flicker on Tiffany's finger triggered a click in her head. This was too good to be true. Suddenly, it seemed like she had swallowed a pill that left a bitter taste in her mouth, it lingers there and grows more serious as it sent a pang of pain in her heart and the gaping hole was once again re-opened.

Taeyeon inhaled and looked away.

"Nice ring, looks expensive" she wanted to let go of her hand but at the same time she doesn't.

The small smile on Tiffany's face faded, her insides stung with so much guilt she had to retract herself away from Taeyeon, A part of her felt embarrassed of the silver band on her ring finger, like it wasn't supposed to be there and she wasn't supposed to wear it but the damage has been done, not just for tonight but long ago when she had said the words 'I do'.

Reality came crashing down on Taeyeon like a tidal wave. The hard and painful truth that what they have right now and what they had back then were just borrowed time, that Tiffany was meant to be experienced but not to keep.

Funny how the people we want to be with for the rest of our lives are the ones we'll never end up with.

Taeyeon tries her best to free her away from Tiffany's adamant grip but the latter wouldn't budge.

"Ahh, let me just... it's sweaty" She lied and forcefully pulled her hand away, creating distance between them at the same time. Tiffany feels her throat start to hurt, she bit her lip and it hurt, everything suddenly hurts.

To dispel the budding awkwardness, Taeyeon thought of starting a new conversation since it was her who brought up the marriage topic anyway.

"So how have you bee—"

"I missed you"

Tiffany was now looking at her, straight in the eyes, with so much power Taeyeon had to back away. With each step backward, the other steps forward until there was no space left and Tiffany lunged herself at Taeyeon, arms tightly encircling the shorter girl's lithe waist and face snuggled up her neck.

It was love and pain mixed into one.

Taeyeon needed self-restraint but logic went down the drain the moment their bodies met in that longing embrace. Her arms went around Tiffany's shoulders, pulled her closer and kissed the top of her head.

It was that bittersweet feeling you wanted so much to feel though it hurts you.

“I miss you so much, I’m so... I’m so sorry” she whimpered against Taeyeon’s skin, almost sobbing, she tightened her embrace, like her life depended on it.

When she finally saw Tiffany’s face, she was indeed almost crying, but not really because Tiffany is a strong girl, she’d try her best to fight the tears just like how she fought her feelings for Taeyeon. What she saw in those glittering eyes were remorse, guilt and desperation. Taeyeon hated it but she couldn’t help but feel somewhat proud knowing that she still has his effect on Tiffany. It’s a proof that what they had before was indeed something special, something real.

It’s nice to know that she still means a lot to Tiffany.

Because for Taeyeon, nothing had changed, Tiffany’s still her everything.

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A lone figure appeared from the living room.

She had this unreadable expression on her face as she walked closer to the balcony, to where two people are sharing an intimate moment.

Taeyeon's face paled when she realized who it was.

She heard a nagging voice inside her head saying that she had just sinned.

Their eyes met.

"Yejin-ah..."

Her heart wanted to explode and there was a rising throb in her head. The past and the present had collided.

She was so caught in the middle.

## Chapter 11

### It's just another night

First, she wished she hadn't seen that look on Yejin's face because now she feels awfully guilty. Second, that Yejin didn't have a strong stamina as she shuffled out of the room with hurried footsteps, leaving a cramming Taeyeon behind.

"Fuck" she cursed as she ran with all her might, grabbed Yejin's wrist and swiveled her.

There was a freshly wiped yet still somehow visible tears on her face. Taeyeon cursed, silently this time.

"Yejin-ah..." Taeyeon adoringly cooed, her thumb wiping away the dregs of tears left on her face. She opens her mouth then closes it realizing she couldn't even give Yejin an explanation.

Or herself.

"I have an urgent thing..." The girl's voice cracked, clearing her throat she continues.

"Sajang-nim called and our supposed taping for next week was rescheduled tomorrow at 7am so I have to go home and pack things, get some sleep--"

She was cut off and dragged into a corner where Taeyeon cupped her face and kissed her tenderly, almost apologetically and it made her sick to her stomach but she responded anyway because this is Taeyeon, and she loves this girl even though she couldn't have her completely.

She knew that right from the start, but still she asked.

"Should I be worried?" *About you and Tiffany*

Taeyeon kept mum, the answer was pretty much palpable.

The hallway was quiet and the lightings were dim, casting the narrow pathway a yellowish glow. Taeyeon held her close, showered her with small kisses but Taeyeon's eyes were dark and impenetrable. As Taeyeon aims for her neck, Yejin redirects the girl's face to hers and presses their lips together instead.

Taeyeon was never the vocal type of person. Sure, she sings well, her voice is unbelievable but she doesn't really tell much about what she feels, her actions make up for it. They had been slipping their tongues in and out of each other's mouth. Yejin yet again fused their lips into a soft, lingering kiss before pulling back.

In the middle of their jagged breaths, she asks again, murmurs the question to Taeyeon's lips with her eyes closed, afraid to see or even hear the answer.

"Should I be worried?"

She feels Taeyeon's eyes flutter open and the girl pulling back, Yejin kept her eyes closed the whole time, scared that if she opens them, the river of tears will flow and the other one will see and will stay by her side because she pities her. But that's not what she wants.

Taeyeon kisses her closed eyes and then her forehead.

"I'll take you home" Taeyeon takes her hand but she jerks it away. Hard.

They stare at each other for the longest time before Yejin puts a hand on her temples, heaves a sigh and walks past Taeyeon who couldn't do anything but look down on the floor.

She caught Yejin by the wrist.

"I do love you" she speaks.

"Do you?" Yejin counters back as quickly as she can, gives Taeyeon a piercing gaze before freeing her hand from the latter's grip and goes out of sight. Taeyeon tails her all the way to the elevator.

"Stop following me"

Yejin's voice was stern, Taeyeon knew she was pissed off big-time, she's not even calling her unnie anymore so she makes a call and dashes to the glass walss at the end of the hall.

"Hi I need a cab, 514 Gangnam, Victorious building. Yes, yes she's wearing a white dress, yes and umm... a gray cardigan, a black sling bag on her shoulder. No, her hair is straight. She's walking now, towards the street, Yeah right there, Okay I see you, please take her home safely, Thank you ahjussi."

She drops the call and watches Yejin ease in inside the cab and off into Seoul's streets and wondered why it didn't hurt her the same way when Tiffany left.

Yes, back again to Tiffany.

Tiffany and her. They're both someone else's, aren't they?

But it's still there, that feeling she revels in before but dreads so much today, and maybe it will never go away.

It's a never-ending cycle.

How can her heart love the same person for almost a decade now, how can that tired and worn-out heart of hers still beat and yearn for the same eyes and the same lips.

Martyrdom may look romantic in movies and songs but in reality, it's nothing but plain stupidity and masochism.

Taeyeon's one hell of a masochist.

She thinks of Tiffany every single day even when the girl had already left her, mourns and cries herself to sleep every night thinking of her, thinking where they went wrong or what she might have done to screw things up but nothing comes to mind, nothing but how much she gave and how much more she was willing to give just for Tiffany.



All for Tiffany.

Because Tiffany is the air she breathes yet suffocates her, Tiffany is the cold rain water trickling down her bare body, owning every inch of it, Tiffany is the loudness of her television, it's the rapid hurricane of words in English she could barely understand and meager Hangul of a 5 year old. Tiffany is the low hum she hears on the radio that drives her insane with want.

It makes the pores on her skin prickle when she thinks of how much she loved her, amazed that she managed to feel something so deep for someone, she never thought she was able to do something like that, her world revolved around the both of them and it makes her eyes tear up when she thinks of how much she had given but lost twice the amount.

And how everything about Tiffany reduced her into this wrecked person she couldn't recognize, broken inside and out.

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She sits nonchalantly on Sunkyu's couch, the living room was a complete mess, like a college frat party just happened, or a zillion kindergarten students had a playdate. It was probably the latter.

Bottles were scattered on the floor, Taeyeon droops down, haphazardly picks a bottle, draws it near her lips and tries to sip, realizing it was empty, she drops it and picks another one.

Doesn't matter if it's soju or beer or whatever. The stronger, the better.

Leaning her head backwards to take a swig, her sluggish eyes met a pair that of a doe's. Yoona's chin rest on top of Taeyeon's head and her long arms are loosely tangled around Taeyeon's neck.

The short one downs her drink then sniffs.

"Unnie, how bad was it?" Yoona surmised.

Taeyeon guzzles for a second.

"Very" she croaks.

"Just know that we're here and we love you" Taeyeon hums, Yoona kisses the top of her head.

The rest of the girls say their goodbyes and heads home.

Sunkyu invades the short girl's bubble and digs through her jean pockets.

"What in the world...?!" Taeyeon flinches.

"I'll take this, thank you very much, you're free to crash here for the night, there's no way in hell I'm letting you drive in that condition" Sunkyu tells her, car keys on one hand.

"Fine"

"You can't drive Taeng, look at you, do you want to die?"

"Oh, I've been wanting to" Taeyeon answers almost automatically, takes another swig, her lazy eyes stare off into nothing in particular.

Sunkyu closes her eyes and sighs out of exasperation. It's not even that she's getting dog-tired of babysitting Taeyeon whenever the girl decides to be the most miserable person in the world; it's just that she's had enough of seeing the both of them like this, especially Taeyeon.

Light footsteps tap the floor as Tiffany approaches them looking apologetic; Sunkyu gives her an understanding smile, put a hand on her shoulder and lightly pushes her towards the couch where Taeyeon is 'zombying' herself.

"May I sit?"

Taeyeon doesn't answer but scoots, in a lethargic way.

The couch dips.

Tiffany studies her for a long time and notices the melancholy in those eyes, not once in a million times she's peered into them has she seen them that lonely. She concludes that she was right. Taeyeon had changed, and it wasn't for the better.

Taeyeon takes another swig, her eyebrows crease, the bitterness of it all stays at the back of her tongue and she wants to gag.

"I'm sorry" Tiffany pipes in with eyes downcast.

"You say that a lot" the other girl answers, grins to herself. She must've thought it looked cool on her, it didn't. It only showed how miserable she is.

"I meant it"

"Do you remember the last time you said that?" Taeyeon inquires a minute later.

The question hangs in the air.

"It...was, it was..." Tiffany mumbles, she swears she heard her heart crack inside her chest.

"The night before your wedding" Taeyeon finishes, eyes deadpan and blank.

Tiffany closes her eyes and bites her lip, gathers the courage to look up only to see a pair of glassy eyes mirroring her own, and that pained smile on Taeyeon's face.

Her heart died, Taeyeon's too beautiful to look so miserable. *But you made her like this*

She inches forward and reaches out for Taeyeon's hand, clasps it.

"Taeyeon..."

The latter retracts her hand, puts it on top of Tiffany's instead, thumb brushing that delicate skin she knew too well.

How many times had she kissed her hand?

"Not your fault" says Taeyeon and smiles. She smiles because the moon is now at its peak and Tiffany looks so breathtaking under the moonlight, mesmerized by how the both of them have the same glassy eyes seemingly about to shatter at any given second and how everything she had ever wanted all her life is just right in front of her, but can't have it.

Taeyeon fights to keep her composure, her throat starts hurting and she's afraid that there will be no stopping the tears if she blinks even for a second.

No, not in front of Tiffany.

Save some of your pride.

She gets up and heads elsewhere, tears falling with every step now that she has her back on Tiffany, and hates the fact that she loves her too much to even hate her.

## Chapter 12

### The Climax

Taeyeon closes the door.

A loud thud reverberates.

She faces the mirror and looks back at her reflection, sees a woman she could barely recognize. The old vibrant girl she used to call herself had seemingly retrogressed into this stressed and overworked woman drowning in depression. The bags under her eyes are getting bigger and darker, those very orbs have harbored loneliness even before, but today, it seems a lot clearer.

Sure, being away from the comforts of her own home in Jeonju, being without umma, appa, Jiwoong and Hayeon is such a pain in the neck but throughout her budding career and her now phenomenal success and fame as SNSD's leader and a solo artist, she has grown accustomed to it. After all, she has to make a living whilst living the dream.

It's a win-win.

Ain't it?

But of course she cannot control the people she'll meet. Nasty ones, rare genuine ones and the fake ones, oh yes most of them are fraud, she thinks. If she weren't this famous and talented, if she weren't this beautiful and flawless, would they even waste their time and money on her?

Fat chance.

If she could un-meet people, she would.

But even though given the privilege, she certainly wouldn't un-meet Tiffany; no matter how badly she wanted to, needed to. Because if it weren't for Tiffany she wouldn't be happy, wouldn't be sad, wouldn't be able to feel anything at all, she wouldn't be herself. So Tiffany is an exception, no matter what kind of bullshit she has to go through.

Taeyeon closes her eyes, splashes it with water because it burns, her eyes surge with hot. Suppressed tears she has kept inside for so long. She thought she'd get used to this vicious cycle of problems, privacy and emotional struggles but she thought wrong as she succumbs to the floor and sets the pent-up feelings free.

Searing tears rush down from her eyes, it's all too much.

Yejin and Tiffany.

She sobs.

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"Yeah, be home later I guess" Tiffany's low and raspy voice resonates in the living room.

“I guess, meaning I’m not sure, hello, you okay Khunnie?”

“Oh God, really, you’re doing this to me right now? Stop it.”

“Fine, *honey*. There, I said it, you happy?” she answers and a series of laughter follow.

But for Tiffany, laughing doesn’t always mean you’re happy. She has been doing that ever since, masking all her fears and doubts with her bright smile, it fooled people yes, but she couldn’t fool herself with it.

“Mhmm, had dinner here at Sunny’s, about 20 minutes or so” She paces back and forth, phone on ear, she smooths her long, wavy, jet-black hair. Tiffany skedaddled a little too near the bathroom, she hears something that makes her stop.

Her eyebrows meet together as she walks further, the other person on the other end of the line seemingly forgotten as she drops the call. She presses her ears to the door and eavesdrops.

Taeyeon didn’t give a single damn even after hearing a loud bang and the door practically swinging out of its place and in comes a panicky Tiffany like a mad tornado. The same tornado that flung Taeyeon to the peak and edge of blissful rapture then sucked her very soul leaving her with nothing. She feels the ginger cupping of her cheeks and Tiffany’s face comes to view.

“TAEYEON! TAEYEON ARE YOU OKAY?! WHAT HAPPENED?!” The girl shouted at her though they were just inches apart. Tiffany brushes away the tear stains on Taeyeon’s cheeks.

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“Hey, I’m really sorry. You sure it’s okay?”

“Alright, don’t worry though; I’ll make sure she gets home safely by tomorrow. Bye, have a nice night Khun”

Sunkyu ends the call and looks at Tiffany who mouthed silent thanks.

“Fany-ah, if you want, you can sleep in my room instead, I’m fine sharing a bed with Taeng”

“Don’t be silly, this is your house, I’ll sleep here with Taetae, it’s fine”

They remain silent for a while. The shorter girl grabs a glass and fills it with water before handing it to the other one.

“Here, knock on my door if anything happens, okay?”

“Okay, I will, Thanks Sunny” Tiffany said, lethargic.

“Welcome”



Tiffany turns to head back to the room where Taeyeon's currently in; the girl has been out of herself since.

"Tiff"

"Yeah?"

"Taeyeon, I thought she had somehow moved on, considering her recent status with Yejin, but from what I'm seeing now, I think she still loves you"

"I can feel it" Tiffany answers.

"So what happens now?"

*I love her too*

Tiffany's voice was trapped inside her throat, Sunny holds her by the waist, ushering her towards the room.

"Never mind, you guys figure it out tonight"

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Taeyeon was not one to openly show her emotions let alone her vulnerability. Maybe it was the time spent apart and the sudden reunion that stirred up her insides like shovels digging up an old grave.

Gruesome and sickening.

She has thought about Tiffany a million times before, but as time flew by, she thought of her less and less, busied herself with work along with the manna from heaven that's Yejin coaxed her to start anew.

But old ghosts do have their ways of haunting.

She feels embarrassed, to Sunny, to Tiffany, to herself. She wasn't used to being taken care of; being so out of herself, like she was dumped by her first love and it was high school all over again. All through the years, it has always been her looking out for all the 9 girls' welfare, along with hers, but she debates that she's also human, and humans have limitations too. Humans are weak, and their hearts are weak but she is a human with a heart. Therefore, she is weak.

A tiny creak was heard alongside the hollow locking of the doorknob as Tiffany noiselessly tiptoes inside the room, just like the old times.

Old times that were long gone.

Tiffany runs a hand through Taeyeon's soft, brown locks and the feeling was euphoric for the two though neither admitted.

"Are you thirsty?" she asks and offers Taeyeon a cool glass of water which the latter turns down.

"What's the matter Taetae?"

"Don't call me that" the girl snaps, Tiffany was taken aback by the sudden harshness.

"Okay, someone's a grumpy drunk" she kids.

"Don't play with me, what are you doing here? Why did you come back?"

"What? I don't get it Taeyeon-ah"

"Why did you come back Tiffany?" she repeats.

"What, Am I not allowed to see you guys anymore, is that what you're saying?" Tiffany raised her voice a little, matching Taeyeon's accusative one.

“Yes! Why don’t you go frolic around with your beau instead? Go paint the town red or something!” retorted Taeyeon.

“Oh this is ridiculous, you’re being so immature. You’re drunk, go sleep”

“I am sober!”

“No, you’re not and I won’t argue with you”

“Why? Is it because I’m just this?” Taeyeon points at herself with a visible hint of belittlement with the way she addressed herself. She got on her feet albeit wobbly at first, and faced Tiffany who was sitting unsteadily on the bed.

“Is it because I wasn’t enough for you and I can’t give you what you want? Or did you just treat me as a fling? A long term fling you had and threw the moment you had a chance to escape? Were you even serious and truthful to everything you said to me before, Tiffany?!”

Tiffany could feel her eyes brim with tears, she tries to hold back but it hurts too much to see Taeyeon like this, to see the both of them turn to this. What was it that she wanted? Normalcy? The absence of judgment from other people even if that meant sacrificing her happiness?”

Funny how she, being the one coming from a foreign land whose society is more open-minded could do such a thing, Taeyeon was the one she wanted to be with, she still is and always will be. Their eyes speak with intense sentiment ready to gush out with a single, careless move done by either of them. Tiffany grips the edge of the bed. This is what she feared, for her defense to crumble down when she’s in the same space with Taeyeon. The other one might not

know it, might even think that she's insignificant now but in reality, she still has her effect on Tiffany, a kind of effect that will never ebb away.

They were each other's first love.

Nobody forgets their first love.

"You go around committing yourself to me and then suddenly changing your mind, did you even think of what I would possibly feel? I know back then that though we were together, there was a point in time where you subsequently met up with that guy, I knew that. You were juggling us but I didn't say a word cause I love you so much I let myself share you with another knowing it was the only way I could keep you. When you said you were going to tie the knot with him, did you know that was like pointing a gun to my mouth, pulling the trigger only for me to still live and deal with the pain myself for the next years of my life? When you asked me why I didn't come to your wedding day I thought you were dumb, so dumb that I had to laugh thinking it was all a big, fat joke of yours.

WHY DO YOU THINK I DIDN'T COME? OF COURSE IT WAS YOUR WEDDING DAY! AND I'M NOT JUST THE BRIDESMAID OR THE EVER FAITHFUL BEST FRIEND; I WAS YOUR LOVER FOR GODDAMN SAKE! WHY WOULD I COME SEE THE WOMAN I LOVE BE MARRIED TO SOMEONE ELSE?!

Taeyeon was breathing heavily and the tears keep coming, she was having a hard time catching her breath, this was it, the result of all the years keeping mum. All the silence, dormant love and hate have come down to this.

Tiffany was sobbing like mad to the point that one might mistake her for hyperventilating.

“And now this, when I have seemed to have gathered myself and getting back on track, you show up and confuse me with your mixed signals or I don’t even know what you’re doing to me anymore...” her outrage gradually eased down, her voice went down to a more considerate tone and her shouts lessened into soft pleas.

It was tiring; fighting with Tiffany was always physically, emotionally and mentally tiring. Taeyeon never really wanted to fight and opts to resolve issues in a different way, it was always Tiffany who was like this, but now, the tables are turned.

Tonight, Taeyeon has had enough, it’s time; if they don’t do this closure now then this whole fucked-up situation will just go on and on.

“Are you doing this on purpose? Do you want to string me along for the rest of my life, unable to find new happiness and start a life with someone else like you did? Do you want to see me miserable Tiffany? If that’s what you want then go ahead and take a good look at me, look at me till you get tired cause you got what you want, I’m all that bullshit so are you happy now?” She ended with a shrug feigning strength but the tears kept on coming.

“Tae, tae I didn’t...I...” Tiffany hiccups

“Then what do you want? *Miyoung-ah*, what else do you want from me?” Taeyeon half-pleaded, half-sobbed with desperation which Tiffany answered by pulling her without hesitation and pressing her lips onto Taeyeon’s, her palms lightly grazing the girl’s cheeks before snaking around the back of Taeyeon’s neck, pulling the girl down on the bed and on top of her.

## Chapter 13

### Unfinished

Shock

That was the perfect word to describe how she felt, it was like a roller coaster ride with a twist, when you have expected and prepared yourself for the knee-quivering fall, the ride cascades backward instead, catching you off guard and defenseless.

When she broke down in front of Tiffany, she expected the girl to just, say sorry, pity her or whatever and then crush her mulish hope once and for all but no. Her mind went blank the moment their lips came in contact, it was an out of body experience like she consciously fainted.

Irony

She doesn't know whether it's the truth or a mind game crafted by her own brain.

Speaking of, her brain buzzed. Her heart stopped and she swore she died for a second. Taeyeon thought about this before, in the dead of the night after extinguishing her desire for flesh and as Yejin sleeps naked beside her. At times, she thinks if this would happen to her and Tiffany again sometime in the future and then scoffs at the thought of her old, innocent, inexperienced self when she and Tiffany shared their first night together.

How long has it been since she last kissed these very lips?

Two years

Seven months

Fifty three days

Thirty six minutes

And forty five seconds

She argues that she may have forgotten how long but at the back of her mind, she counts every day, every minute and second.

Her lips feel numb and cold as ice to Tiffany's agile and fiery lips. It was a hurried kiss, like they're running out of time as Taeyeon gasps for air in the middle of their kiss and in that precise moment her eyes rolled back to its sockets when she felt Tiffany's tongue slither in.

It amazed them of the amount of self-control they had that day, especially Tiffany. Tiffany is always with Taeyeon, always has her hands and arms around Taeyeon, all over Taeyeon in an overtly friendly way, but then again, they weren't 'just friends', the girl never cared if they were in public that the other members, Sooyoung particularly had to keep an eye on them and nudge them from time to time, reminding to tone it down a bit.

And when they're alone like this, things get to higher levels, levels that Taeyeon clandestinely enjoys very much. It came flashing back to her, like déjà vu, Tiffany's slender fingers tangled in her hair, the soft touches on her face, their exchange of breaths, her hands, her stupid hands not knowing where to place itself. Saliva and whatnot are tasteless but not for Taeyeon, she



was in sugar land, with their tongues swirling in a never-ending spiral of ecstasy and their centers unconsciously pressing against each other.

She feels a warm sensation below her stomach, or was that Tiffany's? Logic and reasoning flew out of the window as Taeyeon slowly and agonizingly grind her lower torso further into Tiffany who, in turn, broke the kiss to let out throaty gruff, eyes sparking with evident want, or was it lust? Was it love?

Was it both?

Maybe.

Definitely.

She revels in the sensation of having that familiar body on top of her, grinding. She's lost in the thrill of seeing Taeyeon's porcelain skin through the girl's shirt, her chest, a peek of her bra, the feeling of touching Taeyeon's legs which were firmly spread apart on the sides of Tiffany's legs. She runs her finger up and down and she hears Taeyeon's jagged breathing, and the girl's now fast and forceful thrusts.

## Chapter 14

### Lust and Love

Being wrong once doesn't mean you're not allowed to make it right the second time around. Tiffany assumes but where would this lead them? She's already married, and when we say married we mean 'newly wed', two years yeah sure but that's still considered as 'newly wed'. What would the people think? What would her father say? What would Khun's parents think? What would the world think? And what about Khun?

Obviously she loves the guy, she wouldn't marry him otherwise but it's just different with Taeyeon. With Taeyeon she can be herself with no inhibitions, she can be a raging bull one second then be a gentle flower swaying in the wind the next and Taeyeon wouldn't mind because the girl knows her inside out. With one look, one touch, one word they already know what the other one wants. She's deeply in love with Taeyeon, but she's afraid and she wishes she wasn't.

Will she ever find the courage to take this risk? She asks herself though she knows the answer since day 1.

She looks at Taeyeon, deep in the eyes and sees how much damage she had done. Silently mourns to herself for taking away and killing a part of Taeyeon, a part she failed to take care of and wonders if there's any way she could make it right again. Her eyes slowly fill with guilty tears as her hands travel to the sides of Taeyeon's cheeks and cup it, waits for a chance and kisses her hard, dominates the mouth above her, and advances on unbuttoning Taeyeon's blouse, the button of her pants, undoes the zipper.

Taeyeon moans into the searing kiss and momentarily breaks it off to completely remove her pants and whatnot afterwards helping Tiffany remove her clothes as well and attacking the girl's neck the moment their skins reunited. The sound of Tiffany's throaty purr sent Taeyeon to nearly reach her boiling point, thrusting harder than ever against Tiffany's core now, she places her hands on the girl's chest and fondles it ever so gingerly while her tongue pleasures the girl's spotless neck.

Can someone who has suffered relentless pain still love the person who caused such hurting?

Can they still give it another try?

Impatient hands reached Tiffany's womanhood as she moaned and groaned in pleasure. Her body seems to want to go back to someone else's familiar touch. A digit dipped inside of her, Taeyeon starts to thrust, with their mouths just inches apart, they literally breath each other. She couldn't even describe how much euphoria she's in right now, not because she's claiming Tiffany again after how many years but the fact that they were able to rekindle the spark albeit this night may just be nothing but borrowed time.

And that there's a chance that regret will seep in tomorrow morning when the fog in their hearts and heads have cleared.

Then Tiffany would go back to her married life, and she'd go back to Yejin, if the girl will still accept her, that is.

Nevertheless, she's determined to make it worthwhile for both their sakes as she slowly plunges another finger and watches how Tiffany's face cringes for a while, how she now bites her alluring lips and makes soft mewls of bliss, how she sticks her tongue out and reaches for Taeyeon's lips as they once again reunite their mouths into a sweltering kiss. Tiffany buckles her lower torso and keeps up with Taeyeon's pace.

"Ugh, Ahh, Mhmm Tae...Ugh"

Tiffany gasps with each thrust that does nothing but fuel the fire inside Taeyeon, stokes the hibernating beast within her. The beast that wants to pleasure Tiffany so bad she'd keep coming back to Taeyeon every night, the beast that would go all-out, non-stop until Tiffany has had enough until she could hear that sweet, sweet sound of her name from Tiffany's mouth telling her to go faster and harder as she cums. The beast that would, in Tiffany's own terms, 'fuck her so damn good'. It has been unleashed, there's no stopping the beast.

Her fingers and palms are soaked with hot and wet gleaming pieces of Tiffany and even the bed sheet beneath them. Sunny would choke the life out of her once she finds out that they had sex in this house, in this room and on this bed but she could only smirk in her mind and decided to worry about Sunny some other time.

Can he take you to places like this? Can he pleasure you better than me? You want me, your body wants me, and I can feel it. She thought, it was cocky of her, but it was the truth. It was lust and love with the latter being more prominent. Because for Taeyeon it isn't just sex, it's how they communicate, it's when feelings are too raw and too overwhelming words just don't do justice to it, this is their conveyance.

Conveyance of a love so strong, words aren't needed.

Their eyes were mere slits, too sleazy to be marked as conscious, they weren't mindful. They were high on cloud 9 with each other, with each other's hot skin and mouths and tongues, but aside from that, they were high with the kind of thrill only their hearts could give to each other.

They wanted release, yes.

They wanted pleasure, very much so.

They wanted connection, definitely.

They wanted each other, so very badly.

Tiffany claws her fingernails on Taeyeon's flawless back as the latter yet again adds another finger and pounds those three digits hard, fast and deep inside Tiffany's hot and leaking core. Tiffany locks her legs around the girl's waist and gyrates with the rhythm, has her mouth latched onto Taeyeon's shoulder, teeth marks marred the girl's skin and fingers tangled in her hair.

Audible whispers of pure lust and love fill the humid air.

Call it sex but this is pure heaven. This is how it feels to make love with someone that you truly love.

The bed creaks with every plunge. Taeyeon slows down, feels aware that they aren't the only one in the house, that this is not her apartment nor Tiffany's. It frustrates Tiffany, pushes off the girl above her just a little bit to make space as they now sit on the bed, their cores hot and dripping with anticipation as she pulls Taeyeon on top of her, Taeyeon's arms around her neck, and her own arm around the girl's waist.

"Tiff..."

Taeyeon huffs as she feels two of Tiffany's fingers sink all the way in. She has her arms around the girl's neck while Tiffany has one of her arms holding Taeyeon's back from below, her other arm was down below, coated fingers smoothly disappear and reappear. Taeyeon could feel her own wetness reach her thighs, Fuck. She thought and started gyrating the moment Tiffany added a third digit inside her. Tiffany's lips kissed its way down Taeyeon's throat, chest where her mouth took in half of the girl's left breast and whirled her tongue around the pert nipple all the while pounding hard and deep inside the girl while Taeyeon cooperates by slightly springing up and down.

"Hng, Ugh..."

Murmured Taeyeon as she kept her pace even with Tiffany's relentless speed, she could feel herself coming undone. She kissed the top of the girl's head while Tiffany sucked and fondled both of her breasts using only her mouth. She kissed her forehead, her nose, and her cheeks. Lips travelling to the girl's ear where she nibbled Tiffany's lobe and sensually roamed her tongue all over it.

Lips blend together into a scorching almost hypnotizing-with-ecstasy kiss as Tiffany took out her fingers and Taeyeon instantaneously repositioned herself in alignment with the other girl's center. Arms and legs wrapped around each other they grind to and fro, letting themselves merge into one, Taeyeon and Tiffany, one can never be without the other.

"Ahh..."

"Ugh"

"Mhm"

"Unf"

"Hng"

And other cries of delight were voiced out in between their now slobbery-with-lust French kisses. Their cores clash and collide, breaking the barriers they put up into crumbles in that space in Sunny's home where they're bare and naked and as they claimed and gave themselves to each other willfully.

Cores pressed together, they push as hard as they could, pleasure nubs rubbing against each other in such friction until such time they both shivered to their knees and swallowed each other's breath of helpless moans through their kisses.

Tiffany blinks slowly and smiles at her, places a palm on her cheeks, thumb tracing nonsensical lines on her face, Taeyeon grabs the hand on her face and advances forward, kisses the back of Tiffany's palm and gives those eager lips a slow and tender kiss. The night is slowly dying as they lay in bed in bullets of sweat, In that messy bed and unkempt bed sheets their legs are tangled, hair tousled, arms on each other's waist and eyes never leaving the other they drift off to sleep, just like the old times.

No words were needed.

## Chapter 15

### Here comes more pain

The silence isn't enough

The silence isn't enough

The silence isn't enough

Taeyeon thinks again and again as the pillow cradles her matted and sweaty hair, her head and the inside of her head which at this moment thinks of nothing else save for the woman she's laying beside with. She feels a headache about to kick in.

Both of them are naked and have seem to lost their breaths, could it be that it vanished into thin air while they claimed and claimed and claimed each other all through the night?

The silence isn't enough, she thinks as her stubborn brain replays the sound of Tiffany's voice in her very ears, tongue nibbling and licking her lobes, whispering words that fuel her further into pushing the girl to her peak, which is exactly what Tiffany wanted, or so she thinks. I mean they wouldn't have done it without mutual agreement right?

Time is of the essence as time is quickly slipping away, just a few more hours and the sun's rays will stream through the room's misty white curtain and everything will be crystal clear, at least for Tiffany maybe, because Taeyeon thinks that after this, after this so-called 'closure sex' or whatever, they can finally leave the past behind and continue with life though deep down she knows she couldn't do that anymore.

The throb in her head gradually builds up, she squares her jaw and tries to focus controlling it as though she has magical powers but it only grows stronger the minute a realization sinks in. The realization that she has failed her life-long mission of getting over Tiffany for she is too weak, too vulnerable, too entranced and now she wonders how she'll move forward after catapulting back to square one starts to sink in.

She looks at the sleeping face beside her and the scene wants to make her cry, young tears well in her eyes at the sight of the only woman she has ever loved. Tiffany always look so peaceful while sleeping, it might be too much to conclude but she's almost angelic, with her face bordering seriousness and tranquility, her medium-length lashes framing her closed lids to her ever pointy nose seemed like a work of some divine being, although it really is, and those glorious lips looks very rosy and swollen even.

How many times have they kissed last night?

She couldn't remember, they must've kissed a lot for she couldn't feel her own lips that very moment and blotches of red to purple marks were all over Tiffany's neck and shoulders, she peeked on herself and saw bigger ones on her chest area down below the stomach and at her sides.

The woman unconsciously tightens her hold around Taeyeon's waist and snuggles her face further into the girl's neck, she breaths in.

Air

Breathes in the inevitable air that is Taeyeon, the air that she breathes in but could never breathe out, it stays inside no matter what she does. No matter how many philosophical norms she'd forced into that brain of hers, it just couldn't outshine the reality that no other guy could give her as much as satisfaction and as much love as Taeyeon. And so this was it, her own realization came two years late or should I say was suppressed for two excruciating years.

Taeyeon cranks up the AC, pulls the sheets up to their necks, holds Tiffany closer and dozes off, savoring their shared warmth, savors the remaining borrowed time left in this damned borrowed fantasy.

A fantasy that could've been her reality.

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When she woke up, Tiffany was staring at her.

Tell me how good the morning would be if that happened to you. Tell me if you'd believe you're still living in the real world when last night, after hopelessly and torturously waiting for someone finally comes to you and makes passionate love to you all through the night like a wild, hot and bothered beast suddenly set free out of its cage.

Would you believe?

And then you sleep the night with content yet feel uncertain of tomorrow, if she'll be there laying beside you, you wake up and yes, she's still there looking at you this very moment.

Would you believe?

She utters the words *'I love you so much, I'm sorry'* and claims your lips; you don't even have the slightest time to process her words.

What does that mean?

Is she staying, Is she leaving me again?

How long was she awake and staring at me?

Did I drool?



Did Sunny see us?

You cannot make sense of it all because her mouth is hot against yours and you don't give a damn anymore if you haven't brushed your teeth or washed your face because Tiffany's tongue slips in and merges with your own.

If you were me, would you believe?

Tiffany gives Taeyeon a second to gasp for air before pressing her lips against hers. Like a snake, she wraps her thighs around the girl's waist and pulls herself closer upon having her target locked. Taeyeon just woke up and may still be having early morning retardation for she doesn't know what to do next, and what's blissfully worse was that Tiffany grabs Taeyeon's hands and puts in on her chest herself, as if to say, 'this is what you call fondling and what we're having now is foreplay, a little later we'll be having morning sex'. It hyped the growing thrill inside the older girl, and she didn't need to be instructed further as her hands moved on its own.

What morning does to people, Taeyeon thinks and silently thanks whoever's responsible for this early blessing.

In a blink of an eye, Tiffany's on top of her making hot friction as their familiar torsos met in a heated gyration, like she was desperate for a release? For Taeyeon's release? Is this some kind of a guilt/parting sex whatsoever? Taeyeon's tries hard to form coherent thoughts but struggles halfway for reasoning popped like a bubble as the slickness and wetness of the woman's tongue travelled down her throat, to her clavicle and the narrow valley between her breasts.

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It was all perfect until they heard a voice.

"Sunny? Hey... how are you?"

“Khun?! W-what a nice surprise, what brings you h-here?” Sunkyu stammered. Panic and alarm were evident in her voice.

“Are you okay? You look pale Sunny.”

Who wouldn't be pale when your friend's husband is miles away from a room where his wife is fucking her past lover who happens to be a woman as well?

Oh the fucked up things that happen to people.

Lust disappeared faster than you could say 'hey' as the two of them crammed to get dressed and look presentable in the least. What if Khun suddenly comes barging in when they're not even finished dressing and 'finished' in general?

There goes their release.

Clock is ticking as they combed the floor for their clothes which were badly crumpled, it would be such an amazing theme for a photo shoot though, with the two of them in lingerie and bed hair, how much would Nylon magazine and Vogue pay for this?

Nevertheless, it was priceless because this isn't some photo shoot, this is real life, real feelings and real events are happening. In a second, someone's life will change forever but who knows if it's for the better?

Taeyeon rushed to the comfort room and slammed the door shut as she struggles to place the button of her pants which she wore hastily along with her t-shirt which was halfway done, liquid pours down her cheeks as the thought sinks in. The thought that she doesn't fucking deserve this kind of treatment, this fucked-up pull me/push-me thing with Tiffany, she doesn't deserve to be treated like a... like a mistress, an option when she had given Tiffany nothing but her full undivided love and devotion.

It made her think if she had done another mistake by doing this, another thing to mourn for, for what? 6 or 7 years of her life? She looks at herself in the bathroom mirror and self-pity bleeds from within. How did she turn from being the confident, indifferent and feisty woman last night to this seemingly disoriented woman with tear-stained face, tousled hair, and unkempt clothes? She balls her fist and bites on it while she sobs her heart out, she has been sobbing for as long as she could remember.

Maybe she was played, she was used, and she was betrayed for the second time. Or maybe she wasn't? Maybe this is some kind of blessing in disguise?

She doesn't know what to think, she had lost hope.

"Hey sweetie, why are you...like that? Too much partying last night?" he jokes and Tiffany could only force a smile, good thing her disheveled hair and blouse got along together making the red blotches on her neck invisible.

"Hey Khun, why don't I show you around first?" Sunny inquires then shots Tiffany a knowing look.

"Uhh yeah, I need to finish changing too so..." Tiffany quips, head down.

"Alright then, come out when you're done" he says, lightly kissing Tiffany's head.

It made him stop for a while. "Did you buy a new perfume? You smell different" he says.

What he smelt wasn't Tiffany, it was Taeyeon.

"You know what, never mind, it actually smells good." He said.

"You have to see my kitchen area..." Sunny dragged him out promising him some home-made sandwich to divert his attention.

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The doors closed and Tiffany practically dashes to where the other girl is. The bathroom door opens as Tiffany forces her way in, pushes Taeyeon against the wall and kisses her with all she

has. Taeyeon thrashes about as she tries to break free from Tiffany's grasp but the latter had engulfed her fully from the front.

Taeyeon sobs and whimpers as she uses her fists to push Tiffany away, pounding on the girl's shoulders. Her vulnerability is at its peak.

"N-no... stop it uhmp... I said... enough... stop!" she protests in between the clashing of their lips, her tears start to wet Tiffany's cheek but the girl kisses Taeyeon without the intent of stopping anytime soon, she slips her hands beneath the girl's shirt and wraps it around her torso, embraces her so tight that the latter's ribcage could've cracked in an instant.

She forces her tongue in, grabs Taeyeon's lithe arms and smashes it to the wall, by the side of her face to stop her from whipping around and draws their bodies the closest it could get, bosoms squashed against each other, Tiffany creates a whirlwind inside Taeyeon's mouth to silence the girl's pleas through rough and hard kisses and the warmth of her arms snaked around the girl's waist until Taeyeon's forceful lashing out slowly turn into a soft surrender.

Their tongues meld together like hot fire on iron, their love is what hammers them into a single entity, a sharp-edged sword that can be use either to protect or to kill.

What will it be?

"I love you"

"No, you don't. Cause if you do, we wouldn't be hiding in this..." Taeyeon looks around the room with a thwarted face.

...in someone else's bathroom making out, and you wouldn't have a ring on your finger as well, so no. You don't love me Tiffany."

"I do!" Tiffany rallies with an unexpected shout; Taeyeon, whose hands were wrapped around her neck, dismantles one to cover Tiffany's mouth and instructs her to lower her voice.

Tiffany bites her lips and murmurs it again.

“I do...”

“Then why is it so hard for you not to be with me huh?” challenged Taeyeon.

“It’s just...”

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“I’m sure Tiffany will be here any moment now...” They heard Sunny, basically because The girl sing-songed quite louder than usual as a warning for them.

Taeyeon, out of frustration and desperation, banged her head backwards against the wall and groaned.

“Taetae! Don’t!” Tiffany scolded, face scrunched in worry.

“Look at me...” Tiffany held her by the face while caressing the back of Taeyeon’s head which she had knocked on purpose.

Brushing the fresh batch of tears that emerged, Tiffany says “No matter what happens, Please remember this, I have truly loved you, and I still do, I love you very much Taeyeon, very. much” she whispers into Taeyeon’s mouth as she herself started crying while they gave each other soft pecks over and over again until there was no choice but to let go of Tiffany’s plump lips.

“Wow that’s some new house Sunny’s got there don’t you think?”

“Huh? Ugh, yeah...”

“Very bachelorette approach with the interior design and stuff, I must commend her for that.”

“...”

“I certainly liked the fact that she has Whirlpool’s newest refrigeration unit and custom-made even! Damn, maybe we should purchase one for our kitchen too, which do you like better? The one with the built-in water dispenser or the other one with an advanced freezing technology?”

“...”

“Tiff? Honey, you okay? You seem off”

“I’m just...probably tired, I’m off to bed.”

“Oh, alright, join you in a while” If he hadn’t known better, he’d thought Tiffany purposely backed away before he could kiss her. He didn’t get any response after that, save for the shutting of the bedroom door.

That same night he had himself inside her and Tiffany felt disgusted though she couldn’t comprehend why, he’s her husband after all and this isn’t the first time they’ve done it so why the sudden repugnance? It seemed off, something didn’t feel right. Unbeknownst to him, as he pushes himself in, Tiffany silently sheds tears as she fantasizes of Taeyeon while he does his business. Each moan and whimper, the pain and the pleasure she cries out are for Taeyeon, she knows it’s preposterously sinful to make love to your spouse then think of another but she can’t just let it go, the things that happened between her and Taeyeon, it’s not that easy.

It was never easy that’s why she found an escape route by marrying him hoping that it would surface the normalcy back in her life but everything is starting to backfire now and she’s left thinking if she should regret her decision to marry.

## **Chapter 16**

### **The final choice – Miracles in December**

“Want another beer?”

“Why not?”

Sunkyu throws her a canned Coors from the kitchen as she was rummaging for something to snack on; Taeyeon catches it with one hand.

“Nice catch”

“Don’t want my LA pitch training to go to waste”

They chuckled.

Taeyeon has been camping out at Sunkyu’s home days after that fateful event between her and Tiffany, it was there she cried her heart out until it hurt no more, it was there she had asked Sunkyu the same questions over and over again until, she herself deciphered the answer. Sunkyu didn’t mind, she was always so very hospitable to each member, probably because they treat each other as family and not just mere co-workers you mandatory need to get along with.

They sat cross-legged on the couch as Sunkyu casually swigs from her beer, she makes a sideways glance at Taeyeon whose eyes were frozen and soulless staring into the TV but obviously oblivious to what’s happening to whatever TV sitcom they were watching.

“You’re not okay, are you?”

“I don’t think I’ll ever be okay, well, I’d like to believe I would but of course in due time, but definitely not now, not today, not even tomorrow.” She answers, and smiles. Sunkyu guesses if it’s a sad smile meant to compliment her answer or if it’s because of the Tv Commercial about baby diapers that suddenly aired, showcasing baby butts.

“Hyoraengi’s not answering her phone; do you know where she is? She said she’d come by a little after 8, it’s been an hour.” the shorter one inquired.

“She probably can’t hear it through the blasting stereos in a club somewhere” Taeyeon answers after sipping her drink.

“Ah, problems with oppa maybe?”

“Maybe, they’ve been on a rough patch lately, from what I’ve heard from maknae, Hyoyeon needs time.”

"I see, but then again, relationships aren't always all sugar right? You have got to have some spice."

"Touché" said Taeyeon as she pointed a finger in the air.

Suddenly, Sunkyu's phone went blinking; there was an incoming call from Yuri.

"Hiyah everyone!" said the girl.

"Hey, what the hell are you up to today?"

Taeyeon looked at Sunny and mouthed a question whether it was Yuri or not, Sunkyu confirmed her assumption by nodding.

"Aish, you make it sound like I'm in deep trouble or something" the other one on the line complained.

"You are always in trouble, the last one wasn't even completely 'case closed' you know" the girl reprimanded in which Yuri answered by whining on the phone. It was about the issue that surfaced years ago, about two female actresses vying for her attention, sending her gifts and following to whichever country their world tour would be, the company had to ask, of all people, Jessica to simmer things up with a hunky member of some k-pop group to divert the people's attention.

...it was hard on Sica you know, considering you guys dated and wait hang on, I'll transfer this to video call, and someone wants to say hi to you, just a second"

After tapping some buttons, Sunkyu lifted her phone up in the air and flung an arm around a suddenly choking Taeyeon.

"Yah!" the taller of them screamed and coughed.

"Our dear friend right here, is once again, painstakingly broken-hearted." Said Sunkyu in which Taeyeon responded by rolling her eyes at the statement.



“Yeah, what’s new with that?” Yuri quipped nonchalantly, eyes feigning boredom as she faked a yawn.

“Yah! You black girl!”

“Who are you calling black, you vertically-challenged being”

“YAH!”

“Careful not to get mad at times, they say it can dwindle your height...further” Yuri teased and snickered. Taeyeon mumbled a few incoherent words but smiled nonetheless.

“Okay, enough with kindergarten child’s play, Yuri-ah, where are we off to for your birthday next week? We have to make early reservations since Christmas is right around the corner.”

The two kept conversing as Taeyeon was left to her thoughts. She wanted to cry, joyful tears this time, for she has these amazingly generous friends backing her up every time the world betrays her, she has these sisters from another lifetime that would help and understand her. She knew Yuri wasn’t calling just for the heck of it, she saw a text a while ago while Sunkyu was busy looking for snacks, the girl’s phone lit up and a messaged popped out from Yuri asking if Taeyeon had already gone back home to her apartment safely.

She thought if her phone wasn’t dead, she’d received hundreds and thousands of texts and missed calls by now, she looks at Sunkyu who was talking animatedly about how eggs and strawberries go together for appetizer and a grimacing Yuri saying ‘don’t ruin my party by your weird food suggestions’.

And she smiles, thinks that maybe the storm has passed and she has survived, that love isn’t all about having Tiffany, that you can be contented with the love you receive from your so-called friends, she’s lucky she’s got 8 of those, still 8 because it is near impossible for her to disregard her friendship with Tiffany, despite their history. And she thinks that it’s just a matter of standing up and moving forward, let time heal all wounds and hope for the better.

Like the molting of a snake, you leave the old and scarred skin somewhere and let a new shiny one grow.

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When she finally went home after a week, she expected her house to be in complete dusty disaster, not that she thought a jilted Yejin would trash her apartment, but there's a glint of possibility to that, she's just thankful that Yejin, despite her age was very much level-headed.

It was in the same arrangement as she last saw it, her bed was made, her wardrobe was neat, the carpets were vacuumed, and the sink was empty of dirty dishes although her fridge was unluckily drained of any food. She made a note to go grocery shopping tomorrow or maybe now's not a bad time for that, why do something later when you can do it today, she thought and started heading for the front door once again when suddenly, the locks turned and in came Yejin, clad in a winter coat, holding a bag of groceries.

So much for grocery shopping, Taeyeon surprisingly thought but couldn't deny the puzzling feeling of joy the moment she saw the girl's face. That the girl didn't leave her despite all the crap she put her through, some patience that girl has.

"Y-you're back..."

"Umm yeah sorry for not informing you about my err...hibernation"

"It's okay, Sunny unnie messages me from time to time."

"Ah, I see"

"I bought some stuffs" Yejin said, now entering the room.

"You shouldn't have, let me help" advanced Taeyeon, arms gingerly grabbing the bag of groceries settled on the younger girl's arms letting her take the coat off and slip in into a pair of house flip-flops.

They were inches apart, Yejin tensed and so did the other one. They haven't seen each other for a week and their last parting wasn't very much jubilant, so to say.

They remained frozen for a moment before the latter completely tore her arms away carrying a generous-sized paper bag and settling it atop her kitchen table.

“Thanks for these, how much did it cost?” asks Taeyeon as her hands and eyes search for her wallet.

“No need”

“No seriously, I was about to go out and get some stuffs anyway, and I’m sorry for troubling you, so really, let me pay for these”

Yejin sighed and handed out a receipt.

“Would you like carbonara or meatball spaghetti for dinner? You haven’t had dinner, have you?” Taeyeon queries as she sorts out the contents and now compares a cream of mushroom sauce and tomato sauce.

Yejin’s ears pricked and head shot up, couldn’t believe Taeyeon was able to mask away the tension and be casual with her, since she really didn’t know whether they broke up or not after she stormed out of Sunny’s house warming party.

“I- haven’t had supper...” she meekly answered and felt embarrassed and guilty for a reason she didn’t know. It’s not like she was the one who made a ditch after seeing her first love.

“Chicken or Ham?”

“Chicken please”

“Chicken Carbonara it is”

Yejin smiled, almost teary, knowing that it wasn’t over. They weren’t over.

That same night, Taeyeon had the guts to pour everything out to Yejin. From the events that followed after she walked out to Nichkhun arriving at Sunkyu’s house and everything else in between, they both knew it would hurt but they wouldn’t be able to start anew if everything’s in the shadows.

They had learned how to be honest, even if the naked truth stings like acid on skin.

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*8 months later...*

The surroundings are filled with festivities, there are ornaments and decors of green and red, glitters of gold and silver, the air is filled with chiming music of seemingly angelic voices celebrating the birth of a young one. A mild snow decorates the sidewalks as people go about their business with huge smiles on their faces.

People greet one another 'Merry Christmas' with a sincere smile though they're talking to a complete stranger. Everyone's kinder and happier. The world becomes the best place to live in whenever it's Christmas, it's always a day of miracles.

The Christmas spirit continues to seep in as a group of friends huddle together in Jessica's vast villa, they were having a small picnic before Christmas Eve. Seohyun is carrying a plate of finger sandwiches from the kitchen; she places it on the picnic table in the back yard, smiling all the way as she sees the two gluttons of SNSD play fight yet again, and she wonders why she's the maknae of the group.

"Do you think my hair looks nice?" asks Sooyoung to Yoona, flaunting her short light brown hair.

"No" the other one blatantly answered, although everyone knew this was just pure horseplay.

"Oh C'mon! Don't you know how to suck up on your unnie's ass for some awesome benefits in return?"

"Benefits meaning?"

“Meaning free food of course, and movie tickets or gift certificates, not just in Korea though, I have ones you can use in Japan.”

“I think I can have those with all my CFs right now”

“Oh wow, air head alert, someone please pop that balloon of a head you have” Sooyoung retorted, standing up even, convincing the other people in the room to do exactly what she had said.

“Kidding unnie, now about those free food you have...” cooed a grinning Yoona, clinging onto Sooyoung’s slender arms and giving her the puppy look.

They all laughed.

“Hi, sorry we’re late, did we miss anything worthy?” apologized Taeyeon in the middle of taking her coat off with Yejin tailing behind. They were wearing the same sweater but with different designs and colors.

“Wow Taengoo, you make it sound like we do nonsensical things in here” said Yuri.

“That’s what we’ve been doing for the past hour, Yuri.” Jessica said.

“Aww, not you too” frowned the other girl and they all laughed once again.

“And say that to their matching Christmas sweaters” whistled Sunkyu, chuckling afterwards.

“It was her idea, not mine” Taeyeon defended herself with a scowl, Yejin looped her hands around her arms and smiled at her, told her to stop frowning.

And that she did.

Taeyeon took a bite off a sandwich and closed her eyes, moaning a little.

“Oh my God, these are great, who made these?” she asked, chewing on a mouthful.

“Not Jessica, that’s for sure” interjected Hyoyeon in which Jessica answered by giving her a frosty glare, the former wasn’t threatened obviously, and she even stuck her tongue out.

“You should give this a try” coaxed Taeyeon, holding out a piece of sandwich, Yejin was hesitant at first, consciously glancing over to the other people who were looking at them with the ‘awwww’ look in their eyes, she blushed and took a bite.

Their jovial celebrations went on and Yejin was confident enough to go mingle with the others, leaving Taeyeon to have some girl talk with the other members.

“Hey Sica, what’s up?”

“Same old, same old” Jessica glanced at the person she’s talking to, fixed a stranded hair by tucking it neatly behind the girl’s ear.

“You look vibrant, Taeyeon-ah”

“I don’t have that much money today, you know” Taeyeon joked. Jessica playfully hit her by the arm, Taeyeon winced.

“Don’t think I haven’t noticed the way you look at Yuri”

“Oh please Sunkyu already gave me a lecture about that, don’t follow her footsteps.”

“Sunkyu likes to nag a lot, doesn’t she?” Taeyeon states as they drink from their cups, her companion nods along.

“Her advice usually turns out to be the good ones” answers the other one.

“True that”

Amidst the throwing of bread crumbs presently happening at the picnic table, Sunkyu, having sensed two pairs of eyes burning her whole being, looked up to see Taeyeon and Jessica eyeing her dotingly. She grimaced and voiced out an audible 'WAE'.

The duo only laughed at her.

"Sica, they're bullying me" Yuri comes up at her frowning like a kid. Jessica ruffles the latter's hair.

"Since when did you become the bullied one?" she teases even more. A shrill ringing echo throughout the villa and Jessica's torn between receiving the guest or staying by Yuri's side until Taeyeon decides to step in and get the door for her.

Yuri sits beside a silent Jessica, in which the latter leans her head onto the former's sturdy shoulders.

"How's unnie?" Sica inquires.

"I guess with all your modeling appointments overseas, you haven't heard of us breaking up huh? Well, well, our ice princess is busy earning millions; treat me out to some donkatsu some time, will ya?"

She bolted up.

"You guys, broke up? Why? When?"

"Take it easy on the questions, sweet heart, my heart's welfare may deteriorate in a minute." Yuri joked, snorting a bit.

"Yuri-ah..."

That gentle voice was enough to signal her that she's in this seriously and so she confessed.

“Unnie’s really great and I kind of learned how to love her too. She’s pretty and talented and she loves me, but there are conflicts we recently found out”

“Conflicts like?”

“Are you interrogating me?” Yuri’s eyebrow went up and a playful smirk was visible.

“Just answer me”

Yuri sighed in defeat. “Fine, you know, since we’re both famous and all, though she loves me, she wanted us to be the traditional hidden couple for the rest of our lives, meaning we’d still marry men and have kids but we’d still be lovers, usual routine for LGBTQ in this country.”

“Oh my God Yuri...” Jessica wasted no time and hugged her tight.

“Chill, it’s been what? Six months late for that consolation”

“I’m really sorry to hear that” Jessica said and held Yuri’s hand, fingers laced.

“Plus...”

“Plus what?”

“Plus, I think I haven’t been completely over someone”

“You had another girlfriend?! Did you cheat?!”

“Nope, she was the first one I had, and I can’t forget her.” Yuri said in a serious tone, eyes boldly looking at Jessica, burning her.

Jessica flustered, she could hear her heartbeat teeming with hope and thinks maybe love is sweeter the second time around, that maybe, maybe this time they could make it work.



“She’s not completely over you as well” she answered, Yuri scooted closer and side-hugged the girl while Jessica took this chance to snuggle with the girl the closest she could get.

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With a smile, Taeyeon opens the door and was greeted by a heart-stopping smile she knew all too well. Both their smiles disappeared as they stare at each other for the longest time, not with annoyance or uneasiness, just staring curiously at each other’s pair of familiar orbs. Slowly, little smiles reappear in their faces; Taeyeon was the first one to give her a full smile before Tiffany lets her barriers down and engulfs her in a longing embrace.

“Come on, everyone’s waiting for you” Taeyeon says and grabs her hand, dragging her into the backyard, halfway there they meet Yejin who emerged from the kitchen, after disposing an empty plate of finger sandwiches. Tiffany stops and stiffens but Taeyeon encourages her, Yejin gives Tiffany a sincere smile and walks toward them.

“Unnie, how have you been?” she greets and gives her a cheek to cheek kiss.

Tiffany, a little bit bewildered, looked back at Taeyeon feeling unsure, but Taeyeon was wearing an amused smile on her face. She noticed the matching sweaters and deduced that the two may have ironed out their disagreements. She felt happy for them somehow, but not completely, there was voice inside her that will always claim Taeyeon as hers, though silently.

“I’m... I’m doing okay, thanks for asking, how about you? I saw the news on TV, congratulations on landing the female spot for MBC’s new Tv series.”

“Thank you unnie” Yejin answered and instead of getting in between them, she opt to stay beside Tiffany as she looped arms with her and made their into the backyard wherein everyone did a chorus of loud greetings the moment they saw Tiffany.

“So, how’s life?” initiated Taeyeon as they sat down on a wooden loveseat swing to catch up with life, Tiffany was very persistent on asking if it was fine with Yejin which Taeyeon confirmed for the nth time.

And so they sat and swung.

“So-so, you? You look great; did you change your hair?”

“Nah, mine just grew, Sooyoung’s the one who changed her do, and she’s been flaunting it to our faces ever since she got here” The both of them laughed. Taeyeon saw the silver ring and nodded to herself before asking.

“How’s Khun?”

It took a few seconds for Tiffany to respond.

“Fany-ah, it’s okay, don’t be so jumpy about it, I’ve moved on, we’ve all moved on, It was hard at first, but you know me, I can do anything as long as I have the initiative, I just got tired from all of it and decided to be happy...” Taeyeon held her hand.

...you will be forever engraved in my heart and nobody could ever reach that depth inside my heart, I will never forget nor stop loving you because honestly, I can’t do that, I have loved you from the very start, but I’ve also realized that I can’t always get what I want and that I should value what I have” that moment she glanced at Yejin and smiled.

“...that girl makes me happy too you know, it would be great if it was you but like what I’ve said, it doesn’t always have to be my way, I want you and you know that, but maybe Yejin’s the one that I need.” She smiled.

“Taeyeon-ah, you’re really a grown woman now, I’m impressed” A teary-eyed Tiffany said.

“...I’d also like to apologize for being such a coward and not fighting for what I feel for you, but you know I cherish you a lot and I mess up and I don’t want to do that to you, I don’t want to hurt you because you’re too precious for me to lose so it’s better maybe that though I can grasp you wholly, I just keep you at arm’s reach. And I love you, very much, you know that right?” she said, tears now falling from her eyes.

“I do, and I love you too and we’ll stay friends no matter what” Taeyeon answered sniffing as she wiped away Tiffany’s tears and kissed her forehead.

The closure was finally done.

“Come on now, I’m hungry, let’s go back before Choi and Im finish all the food” she reached out for Tiffany’s hand and together they ran back to the picnic area like the kids they are inside.

The clock had struck twelve and the feast they had been preparing was complete and scrumptiously laid out on Jessica’s long picnic table.

On the right side of the bench were Yuri and Jessica, sharing a plate. Yoona and Seohyun talking about the former’s new action-packed TV series as Seohyun reminds her not to be too hyper as to prevent any accidents, and Sunkyu who was making a video call with her parents, Hyoyeon would interfere at times and say ‘Merry Christmas omonim’ to Sunny’s mother.

On the other side were Sooyoung busily picking out each kind of food there was on the table, Tiffany was in between Taeyeon and Yejin but the couple didn’t seem to mind, they wanted her to know and feel that there shouldn’t be any reason to feel tensed around them anymore.

“I’d like to make a toast for this year’s Christmas and another year of our super awesome friendship” says Jessica, lifting a wine glass as everyone lifted their and glasses clanked here and there.

“MERRY CHRISTMAS!” they all said.

“Guys look here, come on I’m going to post this on Instagram” Taeyeon said as she held out her phone the highest she could.

“On three, one, two, three say kimchi!”

A snap and it was done, It was a picture of all of them, smiling widely and dork-ily. Taeyeon made it her new wallpaper and uploaded in on a social media site wishing all the sones and people around the world a very merry Christmas.

Sometimes, if not most of the time, when parted with someone whom you were deeply attached with, the feeling of familiarity never goes away, no matter how many years may pass the

memories of the good old days when you were younger, immature and insensitive lives vividly inside your mind. Those were the days you felt most alive.

Taeyeon has a lot of those good old days with Tiffany, imagine living with each other for almost half of your lives, even couples who divorced after ten or twenty years of marriage cannot just simply detach themselves from each other right? There's always that one faint yet visible link that bonds them together, when you meet people, you occupy a chapter in their life; it's up to you on how you fill that chapter.

With Taeyeon and Tiffany, a chapter isn't enough. Theirs would be a book full of glowing youth, of hardships and triumph, of tears and smiles, of happy and sad days, of excruciating pain, of jilted jealousy, of passionate lust and heartfelt care and extraordinary friendship but most of all, it's all about love, a love so true that words in this mere fanfic couldn't even get close to explaining.

\*Note: This would be the non-taeny ending

## **Chapter 17**

### **The final choice – All ends well**

Marriage is worth the pain if love is present. Then again, we humans are very foolish and simple-minded creatures believing that a sudden flurry of flutter would last an eternity.

There was a loud bang that resounded in the café, all heads turned.

Her face couldn't be any more redder and his nostrils were flaring, angry tears suppress itself from falling.

Closing his eyes, he heaved. The other patrons were staring at them now, gossiping, he could hear their mouths buzzing with words that will probably turn to news tomorrow on TV, printed media and all over blog sites.

The quivering waitress scampered to clean the shattered pieces of fine china and spilt coffee.

“How could you...”

“I tried, believe me, I tried, for two long years, I did try.”

“And yet? What? So you decide you want to try experimenting with marriage like hot rice and when you get burnt, you spit it out? What about my feelings? Did you ever consider how I would feel? How all this time I’ve given you all my...

He stopped and looked around, cleared his throat and continued in a much lower voice

...all my love, then you do this, confess that you never felt the same way?” he finished, sounding hopeless.

“I did have feelings for you”

“Did?”

“It’s just not...enough” *It’s not that strong unlike what I feel for her.*

She kept her head low for she wanted to cry but held her composure, she couldn’t cry, not in front of all these people, their house’s living room would be such a better place to discuss such sensitive topics but when she was about to break the news to him, he decided they get coffee outside, she just couldn’t wait to let it out of her chest. It was for the best anyway, she couldn’t live with the conscience of doing this to him for God knows how long. Keeping it going would only cause him to hurt tremendously.

Fingers removed a white silver band on her ring finger. A little clank was heard as the object was placed atop the marble coffee table. He lifelessly sank back to his chair, like he lost a million dollar poker game. His eyes were red and watery, face engulfed in his brusque hands as he exasperatingly pulled strands of his hair, holding back all the mixed emotions until he couldn’t handle it anymore, but before he could lash out at her again...

She was off into the streets, but not without shedding a number of guilty tears.

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Taeyeon had gone home after a week of camping out at Sunkyu’s. She opens the apartment door and notices that nothing had changed. Not even the formation of the cracked eggshells she threw in the trash bin when she had prepared a breakfast in bed for a bare Yejin who was at that time, clad in nothing but a blanket nearly three weeks ago.

She plunked face down on her bed and rolled over, placed an arm over her forehead and closed her eyes. It feels good to be home they say, but what about an empty home? Taeyeon contemplates, she has always liked the solace of living single-handedly but in times like this, she longs for a soft voice asking her what they'd have for dinner or to hear a voice coming from the bathroom asking for help scrubbing a back or talking about sweet nothings right in her very ear when laying in bed, because this kind of silence right now is louder than any noise she has ever heard. It's a loud, irritating, annoying kind of silence, or could it be her conscience?

Her phone lights up indicating a message, she checks it reads that she has a couple of meetings for tomorrow, she exhales but continues to scroll down scanning for any more unread messages, there were two from Sunkyu, asking if she had gone home safe and sound, one from Hyoyeon asking if there's any good hot springs in Jeonju, A blank message from Yuri, which she deemed was a gag joke of some sort or the girl may just have clumsy hands; three from Jessica, two of which were quotes and a text asking if she's free to catch up and maybe get some coffee. She was hoping to find one coming from the girl that used to lie in bed beside her every evening, but found none.

Maybe Yejin's phone was broken? Too busy filming? Family matters?

Maybe I fucked up real hard this time, she thinks and swivels to the other side of the bed, reaches for the lamp switch to turn it off and get some proper sleep when her eyes fixed on a piece of paper underneath a velvety maroon box.

Her heart skipped a beat and she could feel her insides rise up to her throat, her whole body piling up with dread. It was the kind of feeling when you know you've done something wrong.

She knows that box pretty well though it has been years since she bought it. She snatched the paper and scooted near the lamp, her fingers were trembling and her heart was pounding like a mad bass drum, it rings in her ears and couldn't be silenced, no matter how hard she tries to calm herself down.

She recognizes the fine and feminine handwriting of a girl.

*Unnie,*

*I don't know when you'll be able to read this but I'm writing it anyway. I'm sorry for storming out on Sunny unnie's party, please tell her that too. I know it's been a great 3 years of me being with you but I guess you just can't erase old scars, it keeps coming back. I have tried my very*

*hardest to help and teach you that there's more to life than being miserable over someone who couldn't reciprocate the feelings you have for them, I guess there are just things that once occupied, replacement would be impossible.*

Taeyeon's tears start to fall, she curses herself again and again, curses this messed-up situation, curses the fact that she hurts people unintentionally and wonders how long Yejin had to make this letter because from what she could see, it probably took her a day, the first half was to arrange her thoughts and words, the other half was to cry her eyes out, judging from the tear stains that have dried up on the paper itself. Taeyeon balls her fists, crumpling the sides of the paper but continues to read nonetheless.

*I know and felt that you have loved me sincerely, I appreciate and am very thankful for that because I saw your effort and sincerity, so I can't just put all the blame on you. It's hard for me to do this because I really love you, Taeyeon, I really really love you, I am helping you heal each time you revert back to her but I'm just human too unnie, I also get scarred by the events that happen again and again and I also get tired of hoping, of waiting, of being happy and sure that's we're back on track then have that same hope crushed the minute you see her. I don't want to spend the rest of my life like that, I don't know when you'll be able to recover but I also need to recover from you. It's not like I gave up on you unnie, It's just that maybe, maybe before you accept help from others, for that help to take effect, you must first help yourself.*

*Thanks for giving us a try.*

*Hoping for the best for you as always,*

*Kim Ye Jin*

By this time Taeyeon was already sobbing as though someone had died. She didn't need to open the box to see the ring she bought for their first year anniversary. She grabbed it and threw it against the wall, with the impact the box broke and out rolled the silver ring, circling its way on the floor before swirling to a stop.

Taeyeon, with fresh salty tears on her face, stood up and opened her wardrobe, she bawled even harder, upon realizing that Yejin's things and clothes were indeed gone, as well as her luggage and together with a very sorry part of Taeyeon's heart.

Staying in that place eats her up. She needs to get out; she needs a change of environment.



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“Unnie, are you okay?” Seohyun asks her out of worry. “Yeah, just, thinking...” She paces. “She’s not answering” Sunkyu surmises as she concentrates on tapping a series of combinations on her phone, trying to contact Taeyeon for the millionth time.

“Maybe she’s not answering it on purpose?” Yuri assumes.

“I’ve been calling her non-stop too, for about an hour now but no answer and-- Fany, will you stay put? You’re making me dizzy” Jessica annoyingly quips.

“I can’t. Okay, I can’t ‘stay put’, It’s Taetae we’re talking about, I’m afraid of what she might do to herself.”

“Unnie’s not suicidal” Yoona joins the conversation as she makes her way from the kitchen, munching on a pocky stick. Tiffany pinches the bridge of her nose and exhales.

“I know, it’s just, I can’t you know, relax, especially now that we don’t know her whereabouts and she’s not answering any phone calls, dammit”

“Calm down, we’ll find her, have you heard from Yejin-ah?” Sooyoung says, engulfing Tiffany in a warm side-hug and asking Sunkyu afterwards, but the latter shook her head in response.

Tiffany sighs and sits weakly on a kitchen stool, wracking her brain for a possible way to locate Taeyeon. They had learned days later that Taeyeon went away to someplace without informing any of the members, her break-up with Yejin and the girl moving out were the only reasons they could think of that resulted to such behavior.

Of course, it is mandatory that Tiffany is included in those predicaments; Tiffany will never be irrelevant to Taeyeon ever. She was very eager to see Taeyeon to tell her the good news but then the unexpected happened. Hyoyeon called her and told her what happened when she was in the middle of planning to tell Taeyeon that she’s finally going to let go and just follow her heart. She had spoken with her attorney regarding the annulment case she filed days ago. She thought she and Taeyeon could celebrate, if the girl would accept her again after all the bull Taeyeon had gone through because of her, but after knowing Taeyeon’s missing, her

excitement dwindled and she was reduced to this anxious worrywart who checks her phone every 5 minutes hoping for a call or a text message at the least.

“Does her car use GPS system?” Seohyun asks all of a sudden and all heads shot up. In a blink, rushed clanking of keys being grabbed on the countertop along with Tiffany’s hurried footsteps can be heard as she dashes her way the fastest she could, ignites her car engine and speeds away at 180 kph.

“Be safe! And don’t get a ticket!” Sunkyu shouts from the window.

“F\*ck the police, go get her back!” Sooyoung dunks Sunkyu’s head playfully and throws a fist-pump in the air.

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“Damn it!” Taeyeon curses as she pounds on the steering wheel, accidentally resulting into a honk. Blood trickles down from her lower lips, she disregards the pulsating pain from the wound as she bites down even harder, sips the blood and spits out from the open window of her Porsche Boxter.

With one hand on the steering wheel and sordid eyes, she grabs another can of beer from a now empty and crumpled paper bag resting next to her; empty cans lie on the car floor and in the backseat. Taeyeon was not one to be untidy but tonight is an exemption. She immediately takes a mouthful, as if she was drinking water. There was nothing else that could be heard save for the loud and rough roaring of her car engine and tires burning rubber at 200 kph. It was an innate habit of hers since she acquired her driving license, to go around and about, driving with no specific destination, driving alone, driving with friends, or driving with Tiffany in the middle of the night going nowhere which usually ends up in deep and heartfelt conversations sealed with hot kisses inside her car, parked at an emergency pit stop or anywhere suitable to pull over.

The thought of it makes the bile rise up her throat and she wanted to puke so hard, but couldn’t, cause her body was multi-tasking; her brain was busy operating the wholeness of her, the road directions, the maneuvering of the wheel, the gas, the brake, her throbbing temples, her ironically numb yet bleeding sore lips and that gnawing pain in her seemingly hollow heart.

“Leave me be! Goddamn it!” she curses out loud upon seeing her phone light up with calls and messages from people who care for her. She grabs it forcefully throws it against the car floor where the device immediately broke into pieces, the beeping stopped and the fluctuating screen lights totally gave out.

She was now driving in an isolated motorway somewhere in Eunpyeong district when she noticed a mini-cooper from behind, not matching her speed but tailing her attentively. Her fierce, red eyes couldn't recognize if it was a sasaeng or a paparazzi or a lunatic fan, she doesn't care really, she doesn't care about anything at all that very moment. There was also a sudden torrential rain which made it even harder for her to see as droplets land on her view like pebbles; for a second, she was afraid it'd leave a dent on the hood or worse, break the front glass.

The wipers are going from left to right like mad, clearing the view for Taeyeon. However, the loud honking from the car behind made the thumping of her temples harder to bear.

\*\*\*

"Come on, why aren't you picking up?!" Tiffany shouts into her mobile though unheard by the person was trying to contact. She had activated her own GPS system which allowed her to locate Taeyeon's whereabouts and stepped on the gas real hard the minute she found out where the other girl was. It didn't matter if she was practically draining her gas tank or getting ticket after ticket along the way, she needs to stop Taeyeon; she just had to.

The night was dripping in pitch black and drowning in the never-ending rain, it was like driving through a tunnel leading to hell, no greeneries, no sun, no blue sky and white clouds, no nothing, just pure black and the scanty headlights from a pair of car driving as though they were being chased by the police force.

Tiffany cries over the phone, sobs even and throws it away when it stopped ringing and was replaced by information telling her that the call was unable to be transmitted to the recipient.

Was it because of the rain?

Loss of signal?

Or did Taeyeon turned it off because she doesn't want to speak to Tiffany?

She rolls down her window and screams Taeyeon's name, her beautiful face now splashed with rain water, her red eyes squinting against the millions of droplets landing on her face, her clothes and the inside of her car now drenched in water. Salty tears and raindrops merging into one as she honks repeatedly hoping that Taeyeon would pull over.

"Taeyeon!"

"Taeyeon-ah!"

"Kim Taeyeon!"

Her lungs were already burning so hard from her shrieks that no amount of rain water could possibly extinguish it yet the car she was following never slowed.

\*\*\*

The relentless honking caught Taeyeon's attention; with creasing brows and eyes narrowing she focused her sight on the car behind through her rear-view, the plate number almost made her stomp on the brake, her heart skipped a beat yet again.

What the hell is she doing here?

It triggered an ominous feeling inside, stirring her emotions and making her dizzier than she already is, light-headed even as excitement, curiosity, madness, frustration, longing and love seeped in all at once. It's like those in the movies, the very cliché chasing game; one loves another who loves another and then for a moment, someone's happy, someone's not, everybody ends up with a broken heart before the wounds heal and if permitted, only then will the happy ending happen. Taeyeon retaliates by not stopping but by going farther away, her gas blinking towards empty but she doesn't care. Unconsciously she starts to cry tears of anger and frustration, all her mixed emotions bursting from within through her hot tears.

"Arrrrghhhghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!" She screams like a madman throwing tantrums as she drives further into oblivion hearing nothing but Tiffany's shouts, the honking of the car and her own frantic voice. A thought crossed her mind, that moment when Nichkhun was hospitalized for drunk driving, it was just a random and sudden thought but it sparked the devil on her left shoulder to think of things, horrid things.

You love her right?

Maybe if you step on the gas harder then something incredible will happen, you'll disappear Taeyeon, no more problems, no more work, no worries about Yejin and Tiffany and the society's expectation, none.

Wouldn't' that be great?

And that she did, stepped on the gas to the point of no return, car engine making an ear-splitting roar and doing what a sports car does best, burning rubber at ridiculous speed. The road is getting darker and the night is slowly becoming an adult, bigger raindrops land on her view like hailstones, the meager light from her car could not give her a clear view amid the growing darkness. Taeyeon could feel herself losing control, her whole body is trembling, she could feel her knees quiver as though she'd ridden a rollercoaster that does multiple loops fifty feet up high, her upper torso pressed firmly in her seat as she braced herself for whatever aftermath her carelessness would result.

But in came a mini-cooper swerving its way to her, smoothly maneuvering to catch up and does an expert overtake, tires screeching like a griffin's roar as the driver tried to balance the loss of control and momentum from the sharp turn, black lines mark the wet pavement. Taeyeon's eyes widen and with her all willpower, steps on the brake.

And everything stops for a quiet moment. For a moment, everything was still; pouring raindrops and the cars' now steady revving are the only things that can be heard. Though raining, smoke and mist fill the air, the two drivers breathe heavily and somehow Taeyeon thinks that she was given a second life though she didn't die. Taeyeon's eyes were red and puffy as she looked into a pair of orbs that mirror her own. Taeyeon forcefully opens the car door, ready and hot for a confrontation as the other girl does the same and runs to her, like it's the last she, Tiffany, was going to see Taeyeon.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?!" shouted a fuming Taeyeon, chest heaving as she breathes in and out with some sort of difficulty while walking towards the running girl.

"What the hell are you doing here following me?!"

"Taeyeon, please hear me out"

"I'm so sick and tired of all this crap, quit it! I don't want any of your games anymore okay?!"

"Taeyeon-ah, shut up for a minute and listen to me dammit!"

“No! Not another word—mmph” Tiffany’s face scrunched against Taeyeon as she went for a kiss to silence the other girl.

It was a split-second involuntary reflex as Taeyeon’s minute hands swung across the flawlessness of Tiffany’s face, probably out of exasperation and desperation, a faint reddish glow now swathe her cheeks. An open-mouthed Tiffany was frozen in place; her eyes couldn’t be any wider, she palms her slapped cheek and slowly turns to Taeyeon, her expression bordering that of the fiercest lion and the tamest doe.

Taeyeon had to stop, shocked of what she had done herself but before she could recover from the bolt from the blue, Tiffany advanced forward and while inches apart from the other, did nothing but engulf Taeyeon’s face with her hands, leaned in and kissed the life out of her yet again, out there in the pouring rain.

Tiffany vehemently tosses Taeyeon against the latter’s sports car and assaults the pair of damp lips. Tears fall as Taeyeon encircles her arms around the former’s torso; passionately reciprocates to every pull and tug of the lips. Drenched in the rain, they exchange breaths and Taeyeon prays to the heavens to not take this miracle away from her this time around.

Taeyeon’s hands managed to open the car door as she pulls Tiffany with her inside where the latter sits atop her lap and continues to hastily slip her tongue in and out of her mouth, arms resting on Taeyeon’s shoulders and fingers tangled in wet hair and in a second, their bodies are empty of any clothes.

A tongue draws a hot line from Tiffany’s chin down to her throat, settling on the collar bone, Taeyeon nibbles as the girl atop grinds her centre against Taeyeon’s ever so slowly and agonizingly and the pleasure makes the girl’s eyes roll back to its sockets. About to wrap her petite arms around Tiffany’s waist, Taeyeon’s arms were pinned against the backseat by Tiffany’s demure yet forceful grip as her tongue claims Taeyeon’s neck and chest, Taeyeon moans, she could feel a kiss on her abdomen, her navel, Tiffany pries open her legs and loops her arms around it, Taeyeon’s mouth remains agape in astonishment. She feels another kiss on her thighs and a long, wet lick from her thigh to her inner thigh. She places her hand on Tiffany’s head, strands of hair now tangled in her fingers as Tiffany dives down to her most sensitive area below. It was heaven all over again.

It was the break of dawn and the road remains isolated, a light purple glow was splashed onto the sky which in a matter of minutes, mellowed down into a gentle and shady kind of white hue, comforting to the eyes.

The wheat field near a provincial road at Eunpyong sways left and right as a fresh morning breeze blows through it. The scent of a grassy morning fill the cool, lazy air as the sun prepares to shine bright behind the fluffy clouds.

*The storm has passed.*

Tangled pair of legs hides underneath an undersized wool blanket; bodies pressed together, chest to chest, a face nestling on of neck and plump lips on forehead. The car window was rolled down as the cool and mild early morning breeze wafts inside, giving comfort to a duo laying comfortably at the backseat.

“Are you cold?” Taeyeon mumbles through her hair. Tiffany shakes her head and rests her face deeper into Taeyeon’s neck, breathes in and exhales a happy sigh; a small smile decorates her face as she tightens her hold on the older girl’s waist. Taeyeon relishes their shared warmth as her hands create nonsensical patterns on Tiffany’s bare back, goose bumps suddenly rising, pricking the latter’s skin and she complains but Taeyeon smiles, closes her eyes and hums a random tune as her lips found its way back to the crown of Tiffany’s head and there she places a kiss for the umpteenth time. Tiffany’s head shot up and the way she looks was breathtaking, her tousled hair cascading down like a rich, dark brown river, strands of it stand out like that of the tendrils of a plant. Her ever pointy nose resembles that of a goddess’ and her quiet eyes filled with love pierced right through Taeyeon’s soul.

Tiffany’s hand snaked up Taeyeon’s neck and behind her ears as she pulls herself forward to peck a pair of waiting lips.

“I love you” she mumbles. Taeyeon, with closed eyes, inhales sharply, feels a déjà vu coming as she braces herself for another ditch Tiffany’s so good at, she could see herself weeping for another month or two and her mind evaporated like ice cream on hot sun.

Tiffany’s lips move down Taeyeon’s lower lip and nibbles again and again until the kiss becomes a steamy one. It was never-ending, lips press together over and over until desire triggers something inside and the kisses quicken, tongues slip in and out, moans add fuel to the fire of desire until the kiss itself extinguishes the burning sensation and slows down into unrushed yet searing open-mouthed kisses. Taeyeon’s hands searches for the one holding her by the face, intertwines their fingers and thinks of nothing else but Tiffany, her skin, her warmth, her scent, the familiarity of her body laying on top of hers and...

And...

The absence of a wedding band on her ring finger?

The kisses halt as Taeyeon pulls back to take a second look and indeed, the ring was gone. She gives Tiffany a questioning stare which the latter only answered by a repeated phrase of 'I love you so much and I'm sorry' as she kisses the only pair of lips she'd ever kiss until her last breath. Taeyeon wanted to cry; and cry she did, for the last time she had heard those phrases the aftermath was miserable, but now feels entirely different, now feels the start of their promised forever.

Tiffany wipes away the freshly fallen tears on her lover's face as they share another tender kiss.

She's back, for good.

**FIN**

\*Note: This would be the pro-taeny ending

Thank you very much for reading! ☺

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