



Hurricane Diarrhea

Itsakyo

SHIT 1

“ONESHOT ONESHOT ONESHOT ONESHOT!”

Taeyeon grinned as she looked at the gigantic tub of yoghurt in her hand. Her friends were half-drunk and delirious as they chanted on and on and on. They no longer saw any rhyme nor reason and she was quite the same. She looked at her hyper friends, Sunny, Yuri and Yoona and Sooyoung, each friend taller than the one on their left and raised the tub up high.

“ONESHOT!” she yelled and opened her mouth wide to gulp the tub of yoghurt.

“YAAAAAAAAY!” cheered her friends as she licked the last of the yoghurt from her spoon.

Taeyeon raised the empty tub up triumphantly and turned it upside down. She had cleaned it out real good alright. Her friends piled on her and patted her back as they cheered and whooped. The wide grin on her face was practically plastered on and it was getting goofier by the minute but no one laughed at her. No one could laugh at her. Not when she was queen. Queen of the night. The queen who completed her dare with gusto.

All hail the queen.

~

“Cheep, cheep,” went the birds perched on a tree outside her window.

Argh. Somebody needs to shut those birds up. My head is splitting.

Taeyeon grimaced and groaned as her eyes fluttered open. Her head wasn't the one part of her body giving her problems. Her stomach was churning. Burning. Squeezing. Twisting.

Am I going to die?

She clutched her stomach and turned to look at the clock beside her bed. It said 8am. Gosh. When did she fall asleep? 4am? 5am? She wasn't sure. Couldn't be sure. Not with her stomach churning more and more with each passing second. Not with that clenching going on in her stomach. It was tightening. Gah. Something was very wrong with her this morning and she instinctively knew where she was heading when her butt clenched hard. There was no time to waste.

She rolled to the side and put her left leg down on the floor to stand. Only, it wasn't the floor her foot landed on. It definitely wasn't the floor because for one, the floor wasn't soft and squishy. Neither was it capable of making sounds of discomfort. What in the world?

The object that she was stepping on was Yuri. Yuri's butt to be exact. And the sounds of discomfort were coming from Yuri too. The poor girl was groaning in her sleep. Taeyeon shook her head at the sight and regretted it at once. That shake had cost her. Giddiness swamped her and she had to close her eyes and wait for it to pass before finding the real floor and standing up.

There wasn't much time left. If she didn't make it to the bathroom in time, she was going to have to deal with an awful mess on the floor and that was the last thing she needed this freaking morning.

Move it! She padded across the not-so-squeaky clean floor of her home, her hands already unbuttoning and unzipping her shorts as she moved. She closed the door, dropped her shorts, tugged down her panties and planted herself on the toilet seat.

“Ah,” she sighed as the unwanted contents of her stomach splattered unceremoniously into her toilet bowl. The stench that wrapped around her like a disgusting cloak made her scrunch up her nose even though this definitely wasn’t the first time she has smelled her own waste. This wasn’t the sort of thing that one would get used to. No matter how many times she has smelled it before, it would still be as pungent the next time she smelled it.

“Mmm!” she went as her eyes squeezed shut, her body tensing to eject the remaining waste that was torturing her innards, and finally relaxing when the last of it left her system. Phew.

Unable to bear the smell any longer, she twisted around to the button that would flush tons of water down her toilet bowl and rid the place of the horrible smell. There was just one problem though. Her diarrheawasn’t going anywhere. It swirled around, turning the water into a disgusting brownish liquid state but didn’t disappear. Holy crap! What was wrong with her toilet bowl! A second flush did nothing to help, merely reducing the colour intensity of the existing brown liquid, and she knew that she was in trouble.

Shit.

~

“What shitty friends I have,” grumbled Taeyeon under her breath as she waved goodbye to her tall friends, Yuri, Yoona and Sooyoung. All of them had pinched their noses as soon as they entered her bathroom and shot her looks of disgust before deciding that they’d better head home to wash up before heading to class. Fortunately for them, home wasn’t so far away. They lived in a nearby apartment that they rented together with another friend who had chosen to stay home to study instead of joining them for the night.

Sunny was her roommate but she wasn’t around to share the misery with her either. That girl had already left the apartment to attend an insanely early lecture--an unexplainable feat in itself. Thank goodness her lectures didn’t start until the next day.

After shutting the door, she walked back to her room and as she stood at the door of her bathroom, the wise words of Kwon Yuri rang in her ear.

“Call a plumber, Taeng,” Yuri had so wisely advised before making her escape from the stench.

Pfft. Like she had needed Yuri to tell her that. She knew that she had to call a plumber but she was reluctant to. Calling a plumber cost money that she was running low on. Plumbers did not come cheap. A quick check on Google was all it took to find out that hiring a plumber could easily amount to a hundred dollars. That was a hundred dollars that she did not want to part with. There was no choice, however. The option of not calling a plumber was non-existent. There was no way she could live with a clogged up toilet bowl.

Shit.

~

Ding dong, went the doorbell and Taeyeon got off her stool at once. That must be the plumber.

“Hi! Are you Kim Taeyeon?” chirped a pretty girl with twinkling eyes as soon as the door was opened.

Taeyeon was not sure if this girl was the plumber or something else. She’d never seen female plumbers before. Was she a sales girl? But sales girls didn’t go around selling things at 9.30am, did they?

“I’m here to unclog your toilet,” explained the pretty girl with twinkling eyes as though she knew of her thoughts. Woah. Scary.

“Ah, yes. Please, come on in.” Taeyeon stepped to the side and the pretty girl with twinkling eyes entered.

“Wow, you have a nice apartment.”

Taeyeon smiled politely. The pretty girl with twinkling eyes who claimed to be a plumber didn’t seem to be looking for the toilet. She seemed more interested in looking at the furniture instead. And other than the huge black bag that she was carrying on her shoulder which might contain her plumbing tools, there was no other indication of her occupation.

“Are you really a plumber?” Taeyeon blurted before she could stop herself.

The pretty girl with twinkling eyes let out a small laugh and grinned, revealing a set of neat and tidy pearly whites, before answering, “Technically speaking, I’m not a plumber.”

Taeyeon’s eyes widened at once and she was immediately wary of the girl until she added, “But my father is a plumber and I know all about plumbing because I help him out sometimes.”

“Oh, well, in that case...the toilet is this way.” Taeyeon gestured towards her room and led the plumber’s daughter in. “I’m sorry but it really stinks.”

“Wow, it really does. What did you eat?” asked the plumber’s daughter as she whipped out a face mask from her enormous bag and put it on.

“A tub of yoghurt.”

The plumber’s daughter raised an eyebrow and Taeyeon felt compelled to tell her the full story.

“My friends and I were playing ‘truth or dare’ last night and I picked ‘dare’. They dared me to finish a tub of yoghurt at one go. Yoghurt doesn’t usually give me a tummy ache but one whole tub is probably too much, I guess.”

With that, the plumber’s daughter giggled. “Guess you won’t be eating yoghurt for a while then.”

Taeyeon found herself blushing and shaking her head. “No, definitely not.”

“Right. Work time.”

Taeyeon watched as the plumber's daughter got to work. She handled her tools efficiently and seemed adept at unclogging the toilet bowl.

"What's that?" Taeyeon asked when the plumber's daughter took out a long coil of metallic wire.

"This? My father calls this the electric eel. It'll clear the clogs that plungers can't clear."

"Oh..."

Taeyeon watched in silence for the rest of the time and soon, the problem was solved and her toilet bowl was cleared. However, her embarrassment increased by tenfold when it became obvious that the object that was clogging up her toilet bowl was in fact, a pair of panties.

The plumber's daughter looked up at her amusedly.

"Another stupid dare," Taeyeon hurriedly explained, blushing at the display of stupidity that she and her friends had put up and hating that she was alone to carry the shame of having their antics revealed to a pretty stranger. Change of subject, please!

"Anyway, thank you so much...er...what's your name?" Taeyeon realized that she hadn't gotten the plumber's daughter's name.

"Well, you know my family name since you called us."

"Hwang?"

The plumber's daughter smiled and nodded. "Hwang. Tiffany Hwang is my name."

"Thank you, Tiffany."

"You're welcome. But that will be a hundred bucks, Miss Kim."

Shit.

SHIT 2

A hundred dollars. A hundred dollars. A hundred dollars.

Taeyeon could've sworn that she had last seen at least two fifty dollar bills in her wallet. At least two! That would've been exactly a hundred dollars. Problem was, there was only one left. Where had the other bill gone?! Already, there was a sinking sensation in her tummy. She had a bad feeling about this.

Feeling desperate, she dug into her bag and rummaged through it.

Aha!

Her fingers struck gold as they wrapped around two bills at the bottom of her bag. Those must be the fifty dollar bills. Relieved, she pulled them out. Oh no. They weren't fifty dollar bills. They were ten dollar bills. Oh no. This was bad. This was very bad. Tiffany, the plumber's daughter was still waiting patiently for her payment and the stress of coming up with the money was increasing in quantum leaps.

"I'm so sorry," said Taeyeon as she straightened up after giving up on searching for more money in her bag. "I'm thirty short. If you don't mind, I'll pay it back tomorrow."

Tiffany smiled, stood up and said, "Don't worry about it. I'll give you a discount. Fifty will do."

"What? No, I couldn't do that. Please, at least take the seventy."

"That's all the cash you have, isn't it?"

Taeyeon blushed yet again and nodded. She wanted nothing more than to melt into nothingness and disappear from the face of this Earth. Just how many things could go wrong in one freaking morning?!

"You'll need twenty for stuff. I'll take fifty. It's fine. I'm not a real plumber anyway."

"But you fixed my toilet. I'll...I'll pay you back tomorrow. I'll send the money to you."

Tiffany stepped forward, placed a warm hand on her bare arm and held it gently. "Fifty is totally fine," she said firmly. "I insist."

The combined effect of Tiffany's warm hand, soul-sapping eyes and subtle fragrance on her was overpowering and Taeyeon was unable to object any further. All she could do was nod numbly and hand over the fifty.

Tiffany's eyes twinkled as she accepted the payment. "Thanks."

"I still feel bad about this."

"Nah, don't worry about it," said Tiffany as she picked up her big black bag and slung it on her shoulder. She walked to the door, turned around and smiled. "Bye," she said, with a casual wave of her hand.

"Bye." Taeyeon waved back.

~

“The plumber’s a girl?!” Yuri’s eyes sprang wide open. “Is she pretty?”

“Bleah.” Taeyeon stuck her tongue out at Yuri. “I’m not telling you. If you’d stuck around to help me yesterday, you’d have seen her.”

“Oh, come on, you’re not that petty,” Yuri said with a laugh and a nudge of her elbow, “...are you?”

“Yes, I’m very petty and I’m not telling you anything about the plumber.” Taeyeon folded her arms, resolute in her stand.

“Taeenggggg...” Yuri whined, trying to coax the information out of Taeyeon.

“Shh. The lecture’s starting.”

Yuri and Taeyeon looked to their left and shook their heads resignedly. It was Seohyun. Seohyun, two years younger and the youngest in their group of friends, who was also on par with them in academic studies despite their age disparity, had basically just politely asked them to shut up. So they shut up.

~

“So where is this house party? I don’t wanna stay too late. Sunny’s waiting for me.”

“Gawd. What game is it this time.”

“It’s not a game. Sunny has this new anime all downloaded and ready to watch.”

“Well, ask her to join us and you won’t have to leave early.”

“She’s out shopping with Hyoyeon.”

“You’re not much fun, you know.”

“I’m fun, okay. Just not the way you think.”

“Yeah, you have weird ideas of fun.”

“Still better than you and your childish pranks.”

“Taeng...” Yuri growled warningly and Taeyeon flashed a wide grin before bolting down the corridor to her next class, leaving Yuri far behind. She looked behind her as she ran to check if Yuri was chasing her and was immensely relieved to find that her friend did not bother to do so. Her lips curved up to the right, celebrating her escape.

Phew. I got away. Haha!

“OOF!” Taeyeon had her wind knocked out of her when she slammed into someone. She fell

backwards and landed on her butt. “Oww,” she groaned and a slew of apologies was lavished on her at once.

“I’m sorry! Really sorry! I wasn’t looking at where I was going. I—”

The apologies come to a screeching halt just as Taeyeon looked up. She blinked, taking a while to register the pretty face that was closing in on her.

“H-Hwang!” Taeyeon blurted, completely surprised to see the plumber’s daughter on campus.

“Tiffany. Hwang is my last name.” Tiffany leaned over her and examined her closely. “Are you alright? Are you hurt?”

Taeyeon shook her head and accepted Tiffany’s hand, allowing the plumber’s daughter to pull her back up. “I’m alright, thanks. I’m just surprised to see you here, that’s all,” she lied. She didn’t see the need to let Tiffany know that her butt hurt like crazy.

Tiffany smiled. “So long as you’re alright. Are you in a hurry to get to the toilet? Don’t let me hold you back,” she said, jabbing her thumb behind her.

Taeyeon realized that the toilets were just behind Tiffany and blushed to the roots of her hair. She had almost forgotten about how they’d met but the embarrassing memories were flushed right back into her mind at the sight of them.

Oh gawd!

She was sure that even the tips of her ears were red from the sheer embarrassment that was oozing out from every pore on her body. There was nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. Nowhere to look but Tiffany. Halp.

“Er...I’m...I’m not...heading to the toilet...” Taeyeon coughed awkwardly.

Tiffany giggled. “You don’t have to be so embarrassed about it, you know. I’ve seen plenty of clogged toilet bowls and believe me when I say yours isn’t the worst even though it did stink like a boss.”

Taeyeon didn’t know what to do with herself until Tiffany burst out laughing.

“I’m just kidding, Taeyeon,” said Tiffany, her eyes twinkling like the brightest stars in the darkest night sky. “It didn’t stink that badly. I was only teasing you.”

“Oh.” Taeyeon still didn’t know what to do with herself and her arms felt completely useless, hanging by limply by her sides.

“I’m sorry.” Tiffany’s smile slipped a notch and she stepped forward to put her hand on Taeyeon’s arm. “I was only pulling your leg. Really.”

Taeyeon froze. The touch of Tiffany’s warm hand on her arm sent a jolt zapping through her bones, akin to the static shock that she sometimes experienced. Her mind was temporarily numb from the sensation and it took her a moment to respond with a mumbled, “I’m okay. Gotta go for class now.

Bye.”

She zipped down the corridor once again, refraining from running this time and managed to put a safe distance between Tiffany and herself before slowing to a normal walk. Oh gosh. Had she just run away from Tiffany? Oh no. Tiffany would think that she’s either very weird or very rude.

Taeyeon inadvertently groaned out loud at her thoughts and jumped in her skin yet again when somebody slapped her shoulder playfully.

“Taeyeon!”

Taeyeon turned and looked. Oh, it was her coursemate, Noeul.

“Where are you heading to?”

“Class.”

“You’re going for 2027 right?”

Taeyeon nodded.

“But that class is that way,” said Noeul, looking puzzled as she pointed in the direction that Taeyeon was walking away from. “I’m in it too.”

“Ah. So it is. Haha, I must have missed it,” Taeyeon laughed awkwardly and turned around to walk back.

“Are you going to the house party at the Jungs tonight?” asked Noeul as they walked together.

“I’m not sure if that’s the one I’m going to but I’m going to one tonight.”

Noeul’s face lit up with joy instantly. “Then it must be the Jung house party! There’s no other house party going on. Nobody would have one on the same night as the Jungs anyway. So I guess I’ll see you there tonight then. Are you going with anyone?”

“Yuri.”

“Oh, cool.”

Just then, they reached the room where their class was being held at. They entered the room, found a couple of seats near the back and made themselves comfortable. The lecturer was already in there and the class started promptly.

“Welcome to CS2027: Genre and Narrative Strategies. Those of you who are in the wrong class can take the chance to leave now,” said the lecturer with a little impish smile. “If you’re in the right class, congratulations, I have a surprise quiz for you. My teaching assistants will distribute the quiz now. You’ll have 45 minutes to attempt it.”

Shit.

SHIT 3

Taeyeon didn't know what to do with herself yet again. Had she been struck by some stroke of bad luck or something?

How was she supposed to do a quiz when the very person who had unclogged her toilet was just a few seats away from her, handing out the papers to them? Her cheeks burned, insides churned and mind crashed. She wanted nothing more than to run away. But she couldn't. Tiffany's eyes burned into hers as she took a paper from her.

"Thank you," mumbled Taeyeon, her eyes not quite meeting Tiffany's. She squirmed. The need to apologize for taking off so suddenly was urgent but she couldn't quite say it now. This was neither the time or place to do it.

Amidst her chaotic thoughts, the lecturer's voice boomed across the room. "You may begin."

Oh gosh. The quiz. Taeyeon tried to focus on the first question but her mind kept straying towards Tiffany. So did her eyes.

Tiffany was very pleasant to look at. Nice long black hair, fair skin, average height, twinkling eyes, a beautiful smile, nicely painted nails of red...the list could go on and on. Her fashion was stylish too. Taeyeon wasn't sure how anyone could make a pair of skinny jeans look quite as delish as Tiffany could.

Just then, Tiffany looked up and caught her staring. She ducked but it was too late.

Shit.

~

"I'm gonna flunk that quiz. I just know it."

"You're not gonna flunk it, Taeyeon."

"I'm sure I will."

"Is it graded?"

"I don't think so."

"Then you have nothing to worry about."

"But still..."

"I told you not to take the class. This is what you get for not heeding the advice of Kwon Yuri."

Taeyeon rolled her eyes. "He didn't spring a surprise quiz on the first lecture last semester. I asked around. Most of them said that it's a manageable class."

“Don’t compare the wisdom of my words to others. It’s insulting.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry, old wise Kwon. Forgive me, my foolishness.”

“You are forgiven, little shorty friend. I, the wise one, am a forgiving soul.”

“Are we there yet?”

“Patience, Taebiwan.”

“Running low.”

“Suck it up, Taeyeon.”

“You suck.”

“And you’re friends with me which means you suck too.”

“No, it doesn’t.”

“Yes, it does. Birds alike, flock together. Haven’t you heard?”

“Shut up, Kwon Yuri.”

“You’re not Seohyun. I don’t have to listen to you.”

“I’m so gonna ditch you right now.”

“Nooo, please don’t.”

“Then shut up.”

“Okay.”

For a while, they walked in silence. But it was barely a minute later when Yuri said, “You don’t really want me to shut up, do you?”

“Kwon. Yu. Ri!”

~

They arrived at the house party at last. The door was opened by a butler of sorts and Taeyeon was wowed by the modern design of both the exterior and interior of the house. The furniture was mostly clinical in colour and design, as were the built-in features on the walls. So although there weren’t any extravagantly expensive items on display, this was clearly the home of a fairly wealthy girl.

Or girls.

Turned out the expensive house belonged to three of them—Jessica, Krystal and Nicole Jung as seen in the pictures hanging on the walls in the hall. Only two of them were at the party though. Krystal and Nicole were everywhere, chatting, laughing and drinking while Jessica was nowhere to be found. But none of it mattered much to Taeyeon. House parties weren't really her thing and she was more interested in going home to watch the anime with Sunny.

She walked around with Yuri who seemed intent on having some fun tonight and said hi to a number of people. However, in spite of her plan to leave after a couple of hours, Yoona and Sooyoung arrived and thereafter, things got crazy and her plan went awry.

~

“MORE MORE MORE MORE!”

Taeyeon flashed a goofy grin and lifted the mug of beer to her lips. Was it her fourth or fifth? She didn't know. Yuri, Yoona and Sooyoung had dragged her into this drinking circle and they were taking turns to gulp mug after mug of beer. She'd been reluctant to join in at first but her reluctance had diminished with each mug she had downed and by now, she was completely happy to finish another mug to keep the circle going.

She emptied her mug, lifted it in triumph and let out a whoop of victory as the others cheered the Yuri on. In the meantime, loud music pulsed through her veins and pumped her up even more. A tiny little warning about not drinking too much beer crept into her mind but she brushed it aside. Nothing could stop her tonight. Nothing could stop the queen.

~

“Urgh...” she groaned, she wasn't feeling too good.

Her hand twitched and she rubbed her cheek on whatever it was on. She was on something soft when she came to. Mmm, she was lying on a bed.

“Taeyeon?”

Someone was calling her. A nice husky voice. She wanted to hear more.

“Taeyeon, can you hear me?”

Taeyeon forced her eyes open and squinted at the blurry person hovering over her. This person smelt nice. A lot like Tiffany actually. Mmm, Tiffany. Taeyeon could distinctly remember what Tiffany smelled like in the hall earlier today. She smiled at the thought of Tiffany. Something about Tiffany.

Finally, her vision sharpened and everything came into focus. It took all of one split second for her eyes to communicate the data to her drunken mind and another split second for her brain to process and recognize the face before she yelped in shock and sat up on the bed.

“FF-Fwang!” she stuttered.

“It's Hwang. Not Fwang.” Tiffany looked amused but Taeyeon thought she saw a flash of irritation in

Tiffany as the girl said, “Why are you always calling me by my last name? My name’s Tiffany. Tee-ffer-nnee.”

“W-Why are you here?”

But before Tiffany could answer her, another girl appeared. Arms wrapped around Tiffany’s slim waist and a chin was propped up on Tiffany’s shoulder as the girl embraced her from behind.

“Hey girlfriend,” said the girl, in a gentle and soft voice.

Taejeon’s urge to pout just then was so strong and she didn’t even know why. She watched as Tiffany smiled and patted the girl’s hands. “Hey Jess.”

“What’s this girl doing here?”

“I think she’s drunk.”

The girl called Jess sighed. “I wished Krys and Nic would stop holding these parties. It’s too noisy to sleep. I was sleeping so well until loud cheers woke me up.”

Tiffany’s laugh flittered across the room. “I don’t know how you can sleep so much. Anyway, I’ve fixed the showerhead you said was leaking. It should be fine now.”

“Thanks, Tiff. I’m going back to sleep. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

Taejeon had remained silent all this while, listening to Tiffany’s conversation, pouting at how familiar Tiffany seemed to be with the girl whom she figured to be Jessica, the third girl in the pictures who had not appeared throughout the party. She definitely felt happier when Jessica left for bed and Tiffany’s attention was back on her. But she couldn’t smile sincerely at Tiffany anymore. Because despite all the haziness in her mind at the moment, one single fact rang through and hit her like a sledgehammer.

Tiffany and Jessica were girlfriends.

Suddenly, arising from nowhere, was a nasty jolt of pain that halted all thoughts. She clutched her tummy, her eyes wild. It was a sickeningly familiar feeling and despite not being completely sober, she knew exactly what that pain meant.

Shit.

SHIT 4

“Taeyeon, are you alright in there?”

“I’m fine.”

Taeyeon had flushed the toilet and done everything she could, including fanning and blowing at the surrounding air, but everything failed. Even putting down the toilet bowl cover didn’t help much. That had been one epic bomb splatter. Argh. What was worse was that this time, Tiffany had been right outside, by the door, so by now, this pretty semi-stranger acquaintance had not only *smelled* her but also *heard* her.

Just. Kill. Me. Now.

Taeyeon was resolute. She was going to stay in the toilet until the stench was gone. It was not an option. Tiffany was *not* going to smell her crap again.

“Are you coming out yet?”

“No.”

“Why not? What’s wrong?”

“Just in case.”

“Just in case?”

“There’s some more.”

“Oh.”

“Tiffany, you don’t have to stay outside. You’re here for the party right? I don’t want to take up your time.”

“I’m not really here for the party but somehow or rather, I ended up here and I’m glad I did.”

Taeyeon wasn’t sure what she meant. Was she talking about her girlfriend?

“Well, you shouldn’t leave your girlfriend alone for so long...”

“Girlfriend?”

“The girl you were talking to a while ago. The one who hugged you.”

“Oh, Jessica?” Tiffany laughed. “She’s not my girlfriend. I love her very much but not in that way.”

“She’s not your girlfriend?”

“Nope.”

Taeyeon’s heart leaped. Jessica wasn’t Tiffany’s girlfriend! Her lips curled up happily and stretched into a grin.

But she probably has a girlfriend anyway.

Her grin vanished instantly and turned into a pout. Darn her negative thoughts. Why did she have to think of things like that! Why couldn’t she think of happier things like how Tiffany was single and had the hots for her?

“Taeyeon, do we really have to talk through this door?”

It became evident that Tiffany wasn’t leaving anytime soon so Taeyeon opened the door, red-faced.

“Are you okay?” Tiffany’s brows were furrowed with worry.

Taeyeon nodded sheepishly. Now, not only had she run away from Tiffany in the hallway, she had also locked herself in the toilet to hide from Tiffany. What in the world was she doing. Gawd.

“You should head home. Did you come with friends?”

“I came with some friends.”

“Do you know where they are?”

Taeyeon shook her head. The last she’d seen of them had been at the drinking circle. She’d left the circle in search of a toilet to relieve herself when she crashed on the bed. She wasn’t actually drunk, however. It was the beer. She’d turn red after a mere mug or two and by the third or fourth mug, she’d feel sleepy. She didn’t know why beer had that effect on her but she found out that it had when Yuri, Sooyoung and Yoona tried to get her drunk on her birthday a year ago.

A quick walk around the house proved to be fruitless. Her friends were nowhere to be found.

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“You’ve gone back home?”

“We thought you’d left. You said you were leaving early to watch anime with Sunny.”

Taeyeon palmed her forehead hard. Sunny! She was two hours late and Sunny wasn’t going to be happy about it.

“I’d better call Sunny now. Bye.”

Taeyeon hung up on Yuri and called Sunny. Fortunately, Sunny was disappointed but not upset.

“We’ll watch it tomorrow night then.”

“Okay.” Taeyeon could finally breathe normally again. “I’m really sorry, Sunny.”

“Taeyeon, I’m not mad. It’s alright. Are you still at the party?”

“Yes.”

“What about Yuri and the rest?”

“They’ve gone home.”

“Oh my, you’re all alone then? Where’s the party? I’ll drive over and pick you up.”

“It’s too late for you to be driving around. I’ll take a cab back.”

“You’re running low on cash, Taeyeon. Taking a cab at this time will bankrupt you.”

Just then, Tiffany, who had been standing quietly beside her all this while, began gesturing to offer her a ride home and she made a quick decision.

“It’s alright, Sunny. Another friend has just offered to send me back.”

“Another friend? Didn’t you say that they’ve all left?”

“She’s a new friend that I just met recently.”

“A new friend?”

“The plumber’s daughter.”

Sunny went silent for a moment as though surprised.

“You met the plumber’s daughter at the party?”

“Mhm. She’s standing next to me right now. I’ll hitch a ride with her.”

“Alright. I’ll wait up for you.”

“See ya in a bit.”

Taeyeon hung up and looked at Tiffany sheepishly for the second time that night.

“Thanks for offering.”

Tiffany smiled and Taeyeon’s heart stopped.

“It’s the plumber’s daughter’s pleasure.”

Eeps! Was she unhappy about being referred to as a plumber’s daughter?

Tiffany giggled and patted her shoulder. "You don't have to look so terrified. I'm not pissed or anything. I'm amused, more than anything. So, I'm known as the plumber's daughter now huh."

Taeyeon was red from head to toe by now and it wasn't because of the alcohol roaming in her blood.

"I..."

"Taeyeon...I'm not pissed. Really. Now, hop on."

Taeyeon blinked. She was standing beside a cute little pink car. Pink! Eww.

"What's wrong? Is there something wrong with my car?" Tiffany asked with a cocked brow

Shit.

~

Taeyeon hadn't realized that there was a tiny little lump on the palm of her left hand. It looked like a blister, only, it wasn't. It was kind of weird but she didn't worry about it since it didn't hurt. And she came to this conclusion by the end of the ride back home. It was an efficient use of her time, having made such an earth-shattering discovery about her palm. Oh yeah.

The car stopped and she finally looked up from her palm. Oh, she was home. She turned to thank Tiffany for the ride home only to find Tiffany's eyes on her, unwavering, intense, mind-freezing.

"Did I do or say something to offend you?" asked Tiffany.

"I'm sorry, what?"

"You were staring at your hands the entire time. Do I make you uncomfortable?"

Taeyeon blinked and stared. Tiffany had not spoken for the entire short car ride back to her home and now she was heaping up the questions. It certainly didn't help that looking at her made it a little hard to come up with an intelligent answer.

"I'm...I'm not usually chatty."

"Really?"

"Uh huh."

"So it's not me then?"

"You?" Taeyeon wasn't sure what Tiffany was talking about anymore.

"Call me paranoid but I can't help feeling that you're trying to avoid me or something."

Taeyeon blinked some more and shook her head slightly.

“No? Am I mistaken then? ‘Cos you practically ran away from me when we met in the hallway. You didn’t seem to want me to hang around when you were in the toilet at Jessica’s. And you haven’t said a single word to me this entire time.”

“I-I’m not avoiding you.”

“And you’re not angry with me over something?”

Now that was ludicrous. “No, of course not.”

Tiffany relaxed significantly in her posture and leaned back in her seat with a smile. “That’s great. I’m glad we cleared that up. Well, I’ll see you in class or along the hallway...maybe...”

Taeyeon’s heart was thumping harder than a rabbit’s hind leg and she couldn’t wait to run into her room and hug her pillow to calm down. “Maybe...”

“Can I have your number?”

“My number?”

“Yes. For your phone. Do you have one?”

Taeyeon felt a little dumb and blushed. She nodded and proceeded to tell Tiffany her number.

“Is this correct?” Tiffany showed Taeyeon what she had entered on her phone and Taeyeon nodded.

“It’s correct.”

“Great! I’ll send you a message. Maybe we can have lunch together or something, sometime.”

“Sometime...”

Tiffany giggled and Taeyeon didn’t know why. “Bye, Taeyeon. It was really nice meeting you.”

“It was really nice meeting you too. Bye...”

Taeyeon clambered out of the car and turned to wave goodbye. Tiffany flashed a beautiful smile and drove off and Taeyeon was left standing on the pavement, staring at the car until it disappeared around the corner.

~

“So how’s the plumber’s daughter? She nice?”

Sunny certainly hadn’t eased her way into the topic. There was no room for relaxing around Sunny when she was being inquisitive and wanted to find something out. Taeyeon knew this trait of Sunny’s all too well.

“She’s nice.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“You’ve met her more than twice, haven’t you?”

“H-How did you know...?”

“I saw you coming back in her car. You didn’t come straight out. The two of you chatted for a bit. And you stood watching for a while even after she’d driven off. She’s more than an acquaintance who unclogged our toilet, isn’t she?”

“You’re such a stalker.”

Sunny grinned and shrugged. “I can’t help it if I’m so freaking brilliant. I’m a born detective.”

“Yeah, yeah. All the criminals out there better be very afraid. Detective Sunny is coming after them next.”

“Hey, hey. Don’t change the subject. Why are you so reluctant to talk about her? Something’s fishy. I know you. You can’t hide anything from me.”

Taeyeon knew that to be true. They’d been roommates for such a long time and knew each other’s secrets. Even the deep, dark ones. She wouldn’t have to say anything for Sunny to know that something is up. Like now.

“She’s a teaching assistant in my 2027 class. And I ran into her along the corridor on campus.”

“Oh...is she a student too?”

Taeyeon shrugged. “I don’t know. We didn’t have a chance to chat much. The few times we ran into each other were pretty awkward for me. I don’t know why I keep seeing her whenever I’m in an embarrassing situation.”

“And that would be an issue because...”

Taeyeon shrugged.

“Ah. You have a crush on her.”

“It’s not a crush. I just think she’s pretty, that’s all.”

“Oh...it’s more than a crush then,” Sunny concluded with a click of her tongue, a habitual act whenever she set her mind to something. “Don’t worry. I’ve got your back. I’ll check her out.”

“No, no, no...please don’t.”

“You sure you don’t want me to?”

“Yes. I’m very, extremely, definitely sure.”

“Okay. Then I’ll do it solely to satisfy my own curiosity,” said Sunny decisively and Taeyeon knew then that there was no stopping Sunny.

Shit.

SHIT 5

“Hi, do you have a minute to spare?”

“Sure.”

“I have a quick survey for you and I need some info.”

“Fire away.”

How Sunny knew where and how to find Tiffany was beyond her but the last place Taeyeon wanted to be was behind a pillar outside the library, eavesdropping on her best friend doing her thing. But between that and not being there; not knowing what Sunny was up to, the former was a much better place to be. So behind the pillar she was, ears pricked and senses tingling. There was just one problem. She couldn't hear them if they didn't speak loudly enough.

Shit.

“Your full name please?”

“Tiffany Hwang Miyoung.”

“Which year are you in?”

Taeyeon pricked her ears but she couldn't make out Tiffany's answer. Darn.

“Faculty?”

“Business.”

“Major?”

“Marketing.”

“Currently attached?”

“No.”

A huge grin stretched across Taeyeon's face as she celebrated in her mind. At least she heard that!

“Any prior relationships?”

Too soft. Argh.

Sunny clicked her tongue, nodded and flipped the paper on her clipboard. “Fair enough. Let's move on then,” she said, her tone all business-like.

“Actually, may I know what this survey is for?” Tiffany asked.

“It’s a survey on the state of love and relationships among undergrads. It’s for a project that we third year psychology students are doing.”

Dang. Sunny was so good at coming up with these excuses. She was too smooth for her own good.

“I see. Well, that explains a lot.”

Sunny pouted apologetically. “I’m sorry if the questions are a little personal. It can’t be helped. Your answers are completely confidential though.”

Tiffany smiled. “I see. In that case, I’ll try to answer them well.”

Sunny lowered her voice after that and Taeyeon could no longer hear her or Tiffany. Sigh. All she could do was try to read lips but that wasn’t a skill that she was good at so she settled for gazing at Tiffany and admiring how pretty her lips were.

Sunny clicked her tongue again and nodded and asked something. Following which, Tiffany nodded, her eyes holding their gaze steady but Sunny flashed a bright grin and spoke some more. What was that about? What did Sunny say? What did Tiffany say? The suspense was killing her!

They talked some more and Sunny smirked knowingly at one point. Taeyeon burned with curiosity but there was nothing she could do. Her curiosity grew even more when Tiffany burst into laughter at that and said out loud, “You’re funny.”

What? Sunny was funny? What? What? Why were they smiling at each other so much! Tiffany smiled beautifully again and Taeyeon twitched. Tiffany was smiling at Sunny too much for her liking.

It felt like eternity but Sunny and Tiffany finally shook hands and parted and Taeyeon could finally breathe freely again. She was ready to leave the pillar and go to class when Sunny jumped in front of her, making her yelp in shock.

“Sunny! Oh my gawd!” Taeyeon clapped her hand over her chest instinctively to calm her palpitating heart. “One of these days you’re gonna kill give me a heart attack.”

Sunny grinned, her eyes alit with mischief and said, “I’m not the one attacking your heart right now. Why are you even here? Spying on me?” She poked her tongue in her left cheek and waggled her finger at Taeyeon. “*Stalker*,” she teased. “Look at how low you’ve sunk for your pretty plumber’s daughter.”

“I was just worried about what you’d do okay.”

“Worried that I’d tell her that you have more than a crush on her?”

“I don’t have a crush on her.”

“Yeah, yeah. And I’m as tall as Sooyoung.”

Taeyeon snorted and turned to leave. “I’m not talking to you.”

“Aren’t you interested in what I found out?”

Taeyeon froze. She was dying to know but it wouldn’t be right. Would it? She decided that if she was going to find out anything, she would just ask Tiffany.

“Nah. I don’t want you to tell me.”

“You wanna hear it straight from the horse’s mouth huh. Respect for you.”

Taeyeon smirked. “Of course. I’m awesome that way.”

Sunny giggled. “Well, I’ll tell you one thing.”

“What?”

“She’s into cute petite girls.”

“She is?”

Sunny grinned widely and nodded. “You stand a chance, little girl.”

Holy shit.

~

Sunny was wrong and Taeyeon couldn’t stop pouting. She didn’t stand a chance. Her hopes had been up for nothing and it seemed as though none of it had happened. Running into her in the hallway, seeing her again at the party, being driven home by her, giving her number to her, had it all been a dream?

Taeyeon sighed and looked at her phone again. No calls, no messages. Nothing. Nothing for days. Boo hoo hoo. Maybe she’d been imagining things. Maybe Tiffany only asked for her number out of politeness. No, that wasn’t right. Asking for a number wasn’t the sort of thing that one did just to be polite. Suddenly, she wasn’t so keen on turning up for class anymore. It’d be so awkward. So awkward to smile and say hi to her, knowing that she hadn’t called or messaged for the whole week. Then again, who’d know that she had been hoping? No one. Yeah, she had nothing to be embarrassed about.

“Still hoping for something?” Sunny appeared by her side and put an arm over her shoulder.

Taeyeon shook her head, embarrassed. “I’m not.”

“You can’t fool me you know. You’ve been staring and sighing at your phone for days.”

Taeyeon blushed.

“Maybe she’s been busy this week,” said Sunny, squeezing her shoulder to comfort Taeyeon and Taeyeon smiled, with gratitude in her eyes.

“Thanks for trying, but I think I can get a hint when I’m thrown one. She was only being friendly when she asked for my number. She’s not interested in me. Why would she be anyway? All she’s seen of me is just a ton of shit.”

“But that’s a great way to make an impression.”

“The wrong kind of impression.”

“It’s a fine line between right and wrong just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

“Are you a psych or philo major?”

“The two are similar in that they both deal with the state of the mind.”

“Right now, my mind is fried. It’s time to head for bed.”

“Goodnight, Taeyeon,” said Sunny as she hugged her. “And don’t you dare skip your 2027 lecture, you hear me?”

Sunny could read her mind with uncanny accuracy and it bordered on spooky at times. This was one of those spooky times.

“I’ll attend it, *unnie*.” Taeyeon finally smiled, thankful to have a friend like Sunny who cared for her.

Sunny grinned, nodded and left for bed. Taeyeon then proceeded to brush her teeth and complete her before-sleep routine of washing her face and applying moisturizer to her skin. She slipped into her favourite baggy t-shirt, shrugged off her shorts, and slipped under the covers. Her head rested on the pillow and her eyes closed. But her mind wandered.

She tried to rid her mind of the thousand and one random thoughts that swam around in it but the more she tried, the more she failed.

One green pea...two green peas...three green peas...am I going to flunk that quiz?

Taeyeon groaned and turned to her side. Not tonight. Please. She needed her sleep tonight. She had two classes to attend the next day and she couldn’t afford to be sleepy. Especially not in 2027. Unfortunately, her mind didn’t want to cooperate with her physical needs and it was almost morning when she finally fell asleep.

~

She woke up not knowing what the day or time was and it wasn’t until she checked her phone that she realized just how late she had woken up.

“Eleven fifty,” she murmured, barely awake. *Eleven fifty? Oh shit!*

She sprung out of bed and zipped around her room, grabbing clothes to change into. Eleven fifty! She had already missed her ten o’clock class and was about to be late for her twelve o’clock class. 2027’s lecture was beginning in less than ten minutes’ time.

Shit.

SHIT 6

Taeyeon aimed to get out of her house in record time. By hook or by crook, she wasn't going to be late for 2027. Any class but that. Tiffany's impression of her was bad enough as it was. From clogged toilets to falling asleep on a stranger's bed, and even stinking up that same stranger's toilet, she'd had enough of looking bad. Looking bad wasn't her. She wasn't like that. She was an ordinary university student, trying to live her life as best as she could. She didn't usually look this bad in front of people, right?

But she didn't have time to ponder over this. She had to put on her lingerie, t-shirt, jeans, socks, sneakers and make sure she brought all her pens and notes. No time to think. She was very, very busy. It was 11.57am when she dashed out of her little apartment and by 11.59am, she was desperate. She couldn't run fast enough to get to school. She zipped by the line of shops, streaked across the roads, swerved violently to avoid knocking into several people and sprinted even faster when she finally saw the main entrance of the private women's university.

12.06pm. She was feeling nauseous. Light-headed as well. But she was finally at the door of the lecture theatre. She didn't know how she got here but she made it. Six minutes wasn't too bad. Thank gawd. Taking a deep breath, she opened the door and peeped. There was a seat right at the back, near the door. Awesome. She had a chance to make it in without anyone noticing.

Easy does it.

12.07pm. She pulled the door open a little more and slipped through sideways, moving to the nearest seat as stealthily as she could. And she almost made it too. Almost.

"I see that you have decided to grace our lecture with your presence."

Shit!

There was a low murmuring of voices and heads turned towards her. She froze, her butt just inches from making contact that the seat that she had run all the way here for. She could see Tiffany turning to look at her from the corner of her eye. Tiffany was looking at her in a way that she couldn't comprehend. It was neither happy nor sad, angry nor amused. But there was one thing she did know. She knew if she could melt into liquid and flow back out of the lecture theatre, she would have.

"I'm very sorry, I won't be late again," she apologized, her embarrassment burning up her innards as she spoke.

The lecturer folded his arms. "I'll appreciate your punctuality in future. Now, let us continue."

Taeyeon decided there and then that she hated this lecturer. Hated him for his surprise quiz. Hated him for shaming her in front of everyone with his sarcasm. Yes, he had emphasized on the importance of their punctuality during the introductory lecture but this was a little too much, wasn't it? There was nothing she could do but sigh. This was *not* her week.

The lecturer continued lecturing and Taeyeon sank low in her seat, trying to disappear from the world. But of course, she couldn't disappear. She had notes to take. And she was determined to ace this class

for revenge. Bah. She looked around as she took her notes out from her bag and caught sight of Noeul waving at her from the right side of the lecture theatre. Her friend seemed to be gesturing for her to sit beside her but Taeyeon wasn't about to attract any more attention to herself for the world.

No. She shook her head but Noeul gestured once more. No. She shook her head again. Noeul looked a little exasperated but Taeyeon was determined to fly under the radar for the rest of the lecture—or even the entire semester, if possible. She wasn't going to move. Noeul, however, seemed to have other ideas. She upped and moved to sit right beside her. Fortunately, the movement went by without any notice from the lecturer.

“Taeyeon,” said Noeul, under her breath.

Taeyeon had to whisper back, “What.”

“I need to tell you something.”

“What.”

“Maybe it's a new fashion trend that I don't know about but I'm pretty sure your t-shirt is...sort of...”

Noeul trailed off, looking unsure about how to put it into words and that made Taeyeon curious. What about her t-shirt? She looked. And gasped. She had worn it the wrong way round.

Oh shit!

Taeyeon buried her face in her palms and tried not to groan out loud. This was by far the worst week of her life!

Noeul nudged her. “Aren't you going to change?”

Taeyeon sighed and nodded. She could only hope that nobody noticed. But who was she kidding? If Noeul had spotted it from seats away...

“I'll be back real quick,” Taeyeon whispered and Noeul nodded.

~

“What did I miss?” Taeyeon whispered as she slid back into her seat with her t-shirt put on properly.

Noeul leaned close and whispered, “You didn't miss much but you can copy my notes after this.”

“Thanks,” Taeyeon said gratefully and smiled. Her eyes then turned from Noeul to the screen but on the way there, they caught sight of Tiffany staring at her, the look on her face inscrutable. Taeyeon blinked, blushed and looked away quickly. It was as though Tiffany knew that she had waited a whole week for nothing even though she knew that it couldn't be true.

She decided to put Tiffany at the back of her mind and focus on the lecture. She was here to learn and learn she would. The lecture was interesting and by the end of it, Taeyeon had to admit—albeit, begrudgingly—that the lecturer knew his stuff well. He was strict but taught well. Quite the rare

commodity in a university, it seemed, where most lecturers seemed more interested in going back to their offices to write their research papers that would keep their job secure.

But just when Taeyeon thought that she could breathe a little more easily, the lecturer said, “You’ll be getting your quizzes back. My teaching assistants will give them out according to surnames. For surnames from A to L, please go to Tiffany, on my left.”

A to L. Oh crap. That means I go to Tiffany.

“The rest will go to Jessica, on my right.”

Jessica?

Taeyeon’s eyes widened in surprise. She hadn’t noticed that Jessica was there at all. But now she saw her, partially hidden behind a stack of papers, asleep. She giggled with the other people in her class as the lecturer shook his head, sighed and walked to Jessica to tap her shoulder. Jessica jolted and sat up straight, her face reddening as lightning speed. Taeyeon giggled again and so did most of the class. Meanwhile, Tiffany was already standing up, ready to hand out the quizzes.

Taeyeon bit her lip and rose from her seat. She didn’t know what she was feeling embarrassed about but it was time to stop feeling this way. All she had to do was take her quiz, smile, thank her and return to her seat. Simple.

She walked up to Tiffany, stretched her hand, took her quiz, smiled and said her thanks. Then, she turned. But she couldn’t leave. Tiffany held on to her quiz. Taeyeon turned back and looked at her with unspoken questions in her eyes and that’s when Tiffany leaned close.

“You didn’t have to lie about your number, you know. You could’ve just said no,” said Tiffany, her voice low yet peevish.

Taeyeon blinked. She had no idea what Tiffany was talking about but Tiffany had already let go of the quiz and was handing out quizzes to other people. She returned to her seat in a daze and didn’t even hear Noeul calling her until she was nudged.

“Hey, how did you do?”

Oh, the quiz. Taeyeon looked and much to her relief, she managed to pass the quiz. Thank goodness she did.

“You passed! Congrats! See, I told you that you had nothing to worry about.”

“It’s not a good score though.”

“Don’t worry, it’s not graded. What it does mean is that you won’t have to take this quiz again.”

“What about those who flunk it?”

“They’ll have to take it again. And study for it. Weren’t you listening at all, last week?”

Taeyeon grinned sheepishly. She knew what she had been doing last week. Staring at Tiffany, that's what. Tiffany. Speaking of which, she couldn't figure out what Tiffany was talking about. Lying about her number? What? Her brows furrowed as she racked her brains to dig up her memory of that fateful night. She'd given Tiffany her number alright. Even checked it before Tiffany kept her phone. And the number was correct. It was corr—

Taeyeon's thoughts halted in mid-sentence and she gasped as she realized her mistake. Oh no. She hadn't lied about her number but she had given Tiffany the wrong one.

Shit.

~

Taeyeon hung around till everyone had left and waited outside for Tiffany. She had to explain. She had to.

"Tiffany!" she couldn't help exclaiming when the said girl finally emerged from the lecture theatre with the professor and Jessica. It was only when the professor and Jessica looked between Tiffany and her that she realized she had perhaps, been a little too zealous. "Sorry to bother you, but can I just have a minute with you?"

"Can I say no?" Tiffany replied.

Taeyeon twitched and her mind fumbled. "N-No?"

And her confusion spiralled even more when Tiffany laughed, a soft tinkering melody that teased her ears and made her want to smile.

"I'm only teasing. Sure, I've got a minute to spare." Then, turning to the professor and Jessica, she said, "Please excuse me. I'll head to the office as soon as I can."

The professor smiled and was about to turn to leave when he paused and added, "I'll be anticipating your punctual arrival next week then."

Taeyeon blinked. "Y-Yes, of course. I'll be punctual next week."

"Good."

And with that, she was left alone with Tiffany.

"So what is it that you have to say to me? If it's about the number, it's alright. Don't worry about it. I understand if you felt uncomfortable giving me your number. As it is, we've only met a few times and we're practically strangers. So."

Taeyeon opened her mouth to explain but nothing came out of it. And as she wrestled with herself, Tiffany looked more and more amused.

"Taeyeon? I need to get going. If you have anything to say—"

“I gave you the wrong number. But it wasn’t on purpose. I didn’t lie.”

Tiffany’s lips stiffened and her gaze intensified. “What do you mean?”

“I flushed my phone down the toilet two weeks ago and had to get a new one. The number I gave you was my old one. I’m still not quite used to my new number yet. I have trouble remembering it too.”

“You what?”

Taeyeon could feel her cheeks burning up rapidly. Why, oh why, did her story have to be about the toilet again?

“My phone slipped out of my pocket and fell into the toilet. I saw it as it was flushed away.”

Tiffany looked as though she couldn’t believe what she was hearing.

“You’ve got to be kidding me.”

Taeyeon shook her head, her lips curling downwards in sadness. “I wish I were...”

“Aww,” went Tiffany and Taeyeon got the biggest shock of her life when Tiffany threw her arms around her and hugged her tight. “Don’t be sad. Shit happens but we flush it away with good things.”

Taeyeon’s eyes expanded and contracted and her arms twitched. Wow, this was the warmest hug she had ever received. Dared she hug back? She moved her arms, wrapped them around Tiffany and gave her a quick squeeze before letting go and Tiffany did the same.

“Thanks. I needed that.”

Tiffany smiled and Taeyeon’s heart melted.

“We all need hugs. Friendly ones, playful ones, loving ones...all sorts of hugs.”

Taeyeon smiled too. “So what sort of hug did you give me?”

Tiffany’s laugh tinkled in the air and her eyes grew warm. “Go figure,” she replied, tongue-in-cheek and Taeyeon wasn’t sure if Tiffany was trying to say something or not.

“How about you give me your number this time. And I’ll call you right now. That way, I won’t make the same mistake.”

“Sure.”

Taeyeon grinned and dug her hand into her bag to get her phone. There was just one tiny little problem. Her phone wasn’t in there.

Shit.

SHIT 7

“What’s the matter?”

“My phone isn’t in my bag. Weird.”

“Did you bring it with you?”

“I did.”

“Did you drop it in the toilet again?”

Taeyeon blushed and shook her head vehemently. “No. I didn’t have time to go to the toilet at all.”

“But you left mid-lecture.”

“Oh, right! I did.” Taeyeon blushed as she recalled why. “You noticed?”

“It’s hard not to notice.”

Again, Taeyeon couldn’t tell if Tiffany was saying something more or just as it was.

“I should check the theatre.”

“I’ll help.”

They re-entered the place and Taeyeon headed straight for her seat. Ah! Her phone was on Noeul’s seat. Strange. Why was it on Noeul’s seat? But she was overjoyed to find her phone and didn’t dwell on the matter.

She twirled round and showed Tiffany her phone. “Here it is!”

Tiffany smiled. “Great!”

Taeyeon pressed the home button to activate the screen and to her surprise, it was a picture of her and Noeul. Wait a minute...

Tiffany pointed at the picture. “Isn’t this the girl seated next to you?”

“She’s Noeul. And this is her phone.”

“Her phone?”

Taeyeon nodded. “We have the same phone but my lock screen picture is my dog.”

“You have a dog?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, I love dogs!”

“Really? Do you have one too?”

“I have a little white Maltese called Prince Fluffy.”

Prince Fluffy? Prince? Fluffy? Eww.

“What.” Tiffany was looking at her pointedly.

Taeyeon blinked. Tiffany didn’t sound too happy either. Opps.

“You made a face when I said my dog’s name. You don’t like it?”

Taeyeon’s brows leaped and she shook her head in alarm. “It’s not that.”

“Then what is it.”

“It’s...it’s...”

“It’s cute, okay,” Tiffany defended her dog’s name but her tone wasn’t severe.

“Yes, it’s cute,” Taeyeon nodded vigorously and agreed nonetheless, not wanting to say something wrong that would mess things up between them.

“It’s very cute.”

“I’m sure it is,” agreed Taeyeon and Tiffany seemed appeased.

“I think we’ve digressed though.”

Ah, her phone. Taeyeon looked at Noeul’s phone in her hand. What could she do? She’d have to find

Noeul and exchange phones with her. Just then, the phone rang. Taeyeon answered it in a hurry once she saw the word 'home' flashing on the screen.

"Hi Noeul!"

"Taeyeon, I'm so sorry, I took the wrong phone back with me."

"I realized. How about we meet somewhere to exchange our phones?"

"The café would be a good place."

"Okay. I'll see you there. What time?"

"Give me thirty minutes."

"Okay."

Taeyeon ended the call and smiled. "I'm going to get my phone back!"

"I've got to go though."

"Oh yes. I almost forgot that the prof is waiting for you. Well, how about this. I'll give you my number and you'll give me yours."

"Good idea."

Taeyeon gave Tiffany her current number and wrote down Tiffany's on her notes. Yay. At last, they weren't just acquaintances with a toilet connection. Now, they were pretty much friends with a phone connection too. Maybe one day they would have a rainbow connection. But now what she had to do was get her phone back to get their phone connection going. Baby steps. Baby steps.

"Okay, I've really got to get going now. See ya when I see ya." Tiffany flashed a bright smile and waved as she began walking away.

Taeyeon smiled and waved too. "Bye, Tiffany."

~

A trip to the café near their university and a cup of coffee later, Taeyeon had her phone back and she couldn't be happier. She was running a little late, however. She hadn't expected Noeul to ask her to stay for a cup of coffee with her but she obliged and now she was late. When she got home, Sunny was

already seated on the couch with a gigantic bowl of popcorn.

“Young lady, what’s up with your concept of time recently?” chided Sunny.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry. I had a cup of coffee with Noeul at the café. She took a really long time to finish her coffee but I couldn’t hurry her.”

“Tsk, tsk.” Sunny shook her head but her eyes were understanding. “Well, hurry up and get your butt on the couch already.”

Taeyeon grinned, brisk walked to the couch, jumped over the armrest and landed neatly on the cushioned seat.

“Lesgo!”

~

Two hours later, Taeyeon and Sunny were sniffing away. Man, that anime sure was good at tugging their heartstrings. It was a touching tale of a little boy’s friendship with his fox and there was nothing that got their taps flowing like cute little baby animals. It was so cute. And the little boy was so brave. Taeyeon’s eyes watered all over again at the thought and she had to try really hard not to end up sobbing again.

“Oh my gosh. How are we going to go out for dinner with red, swollen eyes? People are going to think we’re weird or something.”

“We could stay in and cook noodles…”

“I think we should.”

“Okay.”

Taeyeon stood up and was about to pick up the empty popcorn bowl when her phone rang. It was Yuri.

“What’s up, Yul?”

“Hey, I heard that Jessica is a teaching assistant in your class?”

“Yes, she is.”

“Cool. I’ll join you next week.”

“You’ll what?”

“Crash. Your. Lecture.”

“Why?”

“Because Jessica is there.”

“What logic—”

“Yullogic.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You don’t have to.”

“Sometimes I wonder why I’m friends with you.”

“Because I’m Kwon Yuri, baby.”

“You’re sick.”

“You’re weak.”

“So much love.”

“You know you love me,” Yuri laughed, “and so does half the school population. Anyways, see ya on Saturday.”

“Why am I seeing you on Saturday?”

“Girls’ night out, Taengoo. Have you forgotten.”

“Oh crap. I forgot.”

“Eat some ginkgo nuts. You need them.”

“Your treat?”

“Dream on, babe.”

“Bye, Kwon Yuri.”

“Bye, Kim Taeyeon.”

~

After dinner and homework, Taeyeon finally had some time to herself. She grabbed a change of clothes and headed for the showers but halted right at the door and looked back. Her phone lay silent and stationary on her bed but it felt as though it were crying out for her. What if Tiffany called while she was showering? Would Tiffany think that she was lying again? She could always call her back though.

But no. She decided she didn't want to miss Tiffany's call. However, she couldn't bring her phone into the shower without the risk of damaging it...could she?

Just then, the brightest idea of her life struck her. Aha! She had just the solution. Hehehe, she laughed to herself. She knew exactly what to do.

~

She finally entered the shower and began singing at the top of her voice while soaping herself. She was happy today. And she was in the middle of a particularly rousing chorus when a loud knock on the door startled her.

“Dear diva Taengoo, can your concert be put on hold for a moment? I'm on a Skype call with my parents.”

“Okay, sure.”

“Thanks.”

Taeyeon finished her shower while humming and wrapped a towel around her dripping wet body before stepping out with her phone which was safely encased in a Ziploc bag. Sunny was still on call so she avoided walking past Sunny's laptop lest she got caught on camera. She remained in the room and sat on her bed to towel dry her hair.

She'd just put on a comfortable t-shirt and shorts when Sunny entered the room.

Taeyeon saw her eyes narrowing as her gaze landed on the encased phone so she braced for a Sunny inquisition. Sure enough, Sunny asked, “Why is your phone in a Ziploc bag?”

“To keep dry.”

“To keep dry? Why would you—” Sunny’s brows were sky-high. “Did you bring it into the shower with you?”

Taeyeon nodded.

“Why? Whatever for?”

Taeyeon blushed.

“Oh for heaven’s sakes, don’t tell me it’s because of Tiffany.”

“I just don’t want to miss a call or anything.”

“*Her* call, you mean.”

“Yes. *Her* call.”

“You like her that much?”

“No, it’s not like that.”

“What is it like then?”

“I just...well...I gave her the wrong number the last time so she couldn’t get me when she tried calling. She thought I had lied to her about it until I explained.”

“So...you don’t want to miss her call because you don’t want her to think you lied again?”

“It’s a little complicated but basically, yeah. I just don’t want any more kinks.”

Sunny laughed. “I wish you all the best in that.”

Taeyeon’s phone sang a bouncy tune just then and she opened the Ziploc bag immediately, eyes ablaze as she unlocked her phone to access the new message.

It was really nice talking to you today..i’m really glad we cleared up that little misunderstanding too..hope you got your phone back already!!(:

YES! Tiffany has sent her a message! WOOHOO! YAHOO!

The world was rainbows and butterflies and super and spice and everything nice. Taeyeon's lips stretched to new lengths and curled up so much they could almost reach her ears. This was the best thing to happen to her all week!

Was this the end of her streak of bad luck? Then again, it didn't matter. Nothing mattered. Nothing else mattered because she'd finally gotten here. Here with a message from Tiffany. Tiffany, the plumber's daughter.

Taeyeon took a deep breath and exhaled. This was real. This was happening.

Holy shit.

SHIT 8

“Looks like you got a message from her,” Sunny said, her tone jovial. “Congrats, Taeyeonie. Have fun chatting with her.”

Taeyeon grinned, feeling too happy to speak and too happy to think. But a reply was in order. Tiffany’s message was not the kind that went unanswered. It was open. Open to continuation.

hope you got your phone back already!!(:

A line like that was definitely open. Now, what was she to say?

Yes I got my phone back. Thanks for asking:)

Mmm. Too cold. Delete.

**Yes I got my phone back! I’m so happy!
And I enjoyed talking to you too!**

Mmm. Too chirpy. Delete.

**I’m glad we talked. And I got my phone
back! Now we can talk to each other as
much as we want 😊**

Gosh. Talk to each other as much as we want? Too desperate. Delete.

Taeyeon slumped against her pillows, vexed by the multitude of difficulties she had in coming up with a reply. She’d never had this sort of problem before. Why was it so hard to come up with a reply for Tiffany?

Shit.

~

Taeyeon stretched and yawned. She pried her sleepy eyes open and looked at the wall clock out of habit. 8:09am. It was too early to get up yet too late to go back to sleep. Then it hit her and she jerked up straight into sitting position. Her eyes searched for her phone, roving up and down the mess of sheets with a kind of wild streak. Her phone! She grabbed it and pressed the home button. Her screen came back to life and told her the much dreaded truth—she had yet to send Tiffany a reply!

Shit!

Taeyeon half-groaned and yawned as she stared at her phone in dismay. What would Tiffany be thinking now? Taeyeon groaned again. She'd gone to all the trouble to get her phone back only to fall asleep while replying. This was so great. Just. So. Great.

She dragged her feet to the breakfast table and slumped on a chair. Her chin met the table with a dull thud and brought Sunny's attention to her.

"My, my, what a bright and sunny morning it is," chirped Sunny as she popped two slices of bread into the toaster.

"It's a horrible morning," said Taeyeon through her palms.

"Why? You should be one happy girl today."

"I fell asleep," said Taeyeon miserably.

"Am I missing something here? What's wrong with falling asleep?"

"It's wrong if I haven't sent a reply."

"Reply...?"

"To Tiffany." Taeyeon sounded as though she were in agony.

Sunny turned to lay her eyes on the down-in-the-slumps girl and laughed. "You're telling me you fell asleep without sending her a reply?"

"Yes."

Sunny's laugh rang out and tinkled like silver bells ringing.

"Might I remind you that you're my best friend. You're supposed to be on my side."

Sunny laughed again and shook her head. "I don't understand how you can fall asleep while sending a reply."

"It's not that easy, okay."

“It’s just a reply, Taeyeon.”

Taeyeon merely grunted in reply and Sunny grinned.

“Let me have a look at her message.”

Taeyeon pushed her phone across the table to Sunny and pouted as Sunny read the message. “You tell me how you’d reply.”

Sunny’s brow arched and uneasiness slipped into Taeyeon. She started to rise as Sunny tapped her phone but before she could retrieve it, Sunny grinned in a way that sent a shiver down her spine.

“What. What did you do.” Taeyeon read the message that Sunny sent, eyes wild.

I got my phone back! Let’s celebrate with lunch!

“What did you do!” Taeyeon couldn’t believe her eyes.

“I solved your problem.”

“No, you did not.”

“I sent the message you didn’t have the guts to send.”

Taeyeon could only stare. Sunny carried on spreading jam on her toast and cut them into neat triangles, placing them on a plate, nonplussed.

“I suppose...that *is* a reply...”

“It’s a damn good reply, that’s what it is.”

Taeyeon’s phone buzzed, freezing her words in her throat.

Sure (: Monday. Lunch after class.

Warmth and chills shot up and down her spine and fireworks went kaboom in her mind.

Holy shit.

~

Monday couldn't come quick enough and came too quickly. Taeyeon didn't know if she could make it through lunch without messing something up but she'd find out soon. Much too soon. They agreed to meet at the nearest burger place. Tiffany had a thing for burgers and fries, apparently.

"Mmm, I *love* these fries."

Taeyeon's eyes bulged and teetered on the edge of her eyeball sockets as Tiffany licked the salt on her fingers twice, closed her eyes and sucked them clean.

Omaggarddd.

"Don't like them much?"

Taeyeon blinked. Opps. Tiffany was talking to her. Asked her a question. What was the question?"

"I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"I asked if you like the fries. You haven't touched yours."

"Oh." Taeyeon gazed at her golden brown fries and struggled to find the words to explain why she hadn't touched them.

"I'll eat them for you."

It was all she could do to croak, "Sure, go ahead."

Tiffany's smile could have stopped the most impatient driver in his tracks and Taeyeon tried to breathe.

"Thanks."

Taeyeon watched as Tiffany devoured her fries and polished them off with finesse. Yes. Lots of finesse. A girl like Tiffany oozed finesse. And Tiffany had cleared most of the fries by the time Taeyeon remembered that she was fond of fries herself. She almost pouted at the sorry state of her fries supply when she saw the last fry standing. Her heart leapt. There was hope yet. There was one...more...fry...

"Don't mind if I take the last one, do you?" Tiffany asked, her hand hovering above the last fry standing and Taeyeon found herself shaking her hand and allowing Tiffany to eat the very last fry as well. "Ah, that was so awesome. I *love* these fries," said Tiffany, putting her finger in her mouth to get the last bit of salt on her tongue and all Taeyeon could do was force a smile.

Deep down inside, she was grieving. Mourning. She hadn't had a single fry. Not a single one.

Shit.

~

Conversation between them was easy. Taeyeon didn't have to do a single thing. All she had to do was let Tiffany do the talking. She talked about everything under the sun. The classes she was taking, her part time job as a teaching assistant, her love for dogs, music, books and fashion. She talked about how pink was her colour and belonged solely to her.

“Pink. Mine.”

That was the shortest yet most powerful statement she had made about anything.

She went on to talk about how red was a fabulous colour as well. Red was hot. Red was strong. Red was passionate. It sure sounded a lot like her and Taeyeon mildly wondered if pink was Tiffany when she was younger and red when she was older.

“What about you? You've been pretty quiet all this time. Am I boring you?”

Taeyeon snorted. Tiffany? Boring her? Ridiculous. Listening to her was like listening to world class opera. Not that she was good at appreciating it. She couldn't really appreciate her love and obsession with pink and red either but it was lovely to hear about just the same. Just like world class opera.

“You're not boring me.”

“Don't feel obliged to be nice, Taeyeon.”

“I'm not being nice. I'm being honest.”

Tiffany nodded, satisfied with her answer and proceeded, “So what's your preference?”

“Blue. Purple.”

“Hmm...the cool colours. You're cool. Calm. Quiet. Pensive. Yet totally wacky at times. Intriguing much.”

Intriguing?

Now that was a word she hadn't associated with herself. No one had ever described her as such.

“Why do you say that?”

“That you’re intriguing?”

Taeyeon nodded.

“Because you are. To me.”

Taeyeon’s cheeks heated up faster than an egg over a naked flame as Tiffany carried on.

“I’ve had a question that’s been nagging at me for a long time now.”

“What?”

“The panties that clogged up your toilet. Are they yours?”

Taeyeon flushed and turned a deep, dark crimson red.

“They are, aren’t they.”

A nod was all she could afford.

“I knew it.”

Taeyeon’s curiosity got the better of her embarrassment and she asked, “How did you know?”

Tiffany shrugged. “A gut feeling. Light baby blue, low cut, plain and simple. Very you.”

“Me?” Taeyeon never knew that panties could give her away like that.

“The way you blushed. The way you looked at it. But it’s a shame that it was flushed down your toilet and ruined.”

“Why do you say that?”

“I have a matching pair of light baby pink panties and they’d look so cute together.”

Taeyeon almost choked on the drink she’d been sipping. Almost. But she didn’t. Instead, half of what she had in her mouth ended up on Tiffany. Appalled. She was appalled.

“Omagaaad, I’m so sorry! I didn’t mean...” Taeyeon dabbed at Tiffany’s face and clothes desperately,

all the while wishing that she could somehow, disappear from the face of the earth.

“Taeyeon...”

“Please don’t be mad at me.”

“Taeyeon...”

“I’m sorry.”

“Taeyeon...”

Taeyeon’s hand froze and she looked into Tiffany’s eyes, fearing the worst. Much to her relief, she saw nothing that indicated the worst.

“Taeyeon, I’m sure that spot’s dry now,” Tiffany’s twinkling eyes belied the dead seriousness of her tone and Taeyeon was relieved. Until she looked.

Omaagaaaadd.

She was pressing on Tiffany’s left...left...er...thing with a napkin and had been dabbing at it for the entire time. No wonder it felt particularly soft. She snatched her hand back as though stung.

“Sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay. I don’t mind.”

There it was again. Tiffany’s riddle of more or nothing more. Taeyeon didn’t know. Couldn’t tell.

“I’m still sorry.”

“Don’t be. Just buy me dinner to make up for it.”

Something whirled round and round her heart, warming it up in an instant. Dinner! Tiffany! Dinner!

“O...Okay.”

“I’m pretty tied up for the next couple of days though. After 2027? I’ll have some time.”

“S...Sure.”

Tiffany glanced at her watch and pouted.

“I gotta go.”

Taeyeon stood up with Tiffany.

“Thanks for inviting me to lunch with you. I thought you’d never ask so you have no idea how surprised and happy I was when I saw your message. Didn’t sound quite like you though.”

Taeyeon gulped. She wasn’t sure if this was a good time to come clean about Sunny’s involvement. But Tiffany carried on talking and the moment passed and soon, they were both on their opposite ways, one to work, one back home.

And she was halfway home when it truly hit her. What had happened. Tiffany had happened. Dinner with Tiffany after 2027. It was going to happen. That meant that she had somehow made it through lunch with Tiffany without making her run for the hills. She hadn’t screwed up. She hadn’t screwed up. She hadn’t screwed up!

No shit.

SHIT 9

“Spill the beans.”

“It was just lunch.”

“There’s no such thing as ‘just’ with you and your plumber’s daughter.”

“Okay, it was a good lunch.”

“You do know that I’m asking out of genuine concern.”

“I know.”

Sunny folded her arms and maintained an unwavering stare that rattled Taeyeon’s bones.

“Alright, alright. It went well. She ate all my fries and asked me to treat her to dinner after 2027.”

The widened eyes and slackened jaw was probably the closest expression of shock Taeyeon would ever see from Sunny and she had the strongest urge to take a picture of her to remind this moment by. She’d gone through a haunted house with Sunny during Halloween a couple years back and the tough girl didn’t even look at shocked as she did now.

“What’s so shocking? What?”

“You let her eat all your fries?”

“Yes.”

“Are you serious?”

“Yes.”

“But you *love* your fries.”

“So does she.”

“Oh my...” Sunny shook her head slowly. “You’ve got it real bad this time.”

“No, I don’t.”

“Are you kidding? Remember Noeul? The poor girl didn’t even know what hit her when you stopped talking to her for a month after she ate your fries.”

“I was in my teens then! And she didn’t ask for my permission! Besides, we’re still friends now, aren’t we?”

“You may be twenty-one now but you still love your fries as much, if not more.”

“Tiffany asked. I gave her permission. There’s a difference.”

“You’re in so much denial that you can’t even see that you’re in it.”

“I swear I don’t have it bad. Yes, Tiffany is pretty. Tiffany is nice. Friendly. Kind. But I’m not losing my mind over her or anything like that. It’s not like that.”

“Yet.”

“Yet.”

“Fine. Point proven. Point taken.”

“Thank you.”

“What about dinner after 2027 then? It’s your treat?”

Taeyeon nodded, her face flushing hot again as she said, “Tiffany made a comment that almost made me choke and I ended up spitting my drink at her. To make up for it, dinner will be on me.”

“What comment?”

Taeyeon turned into a deeper red. She couldn’t possibly tell Sunny about the panties!

“Taeyeon, quit stalling.”

Taeyeon inhaled deeply and spoke quickly,

“Shesaidshahasapairofpantiesthatmatchesthepantiesthatcloggedourtoilet.”

Sunny blinked, speechless for a bit and Taeyeon wanted to pump her fists in the air for shocking Sunny for the second time today.

“”Tayeon, this isn’t as one-sided as you’re making it out to be.”

“What?”

“I think Tiffany’s into you. Like *really* into you.”

“What? No. I mean. It’s just a random comment.”

“Remember the survey I did with her? She said she likes cute petite girls. You’re cute. You’re petite.”

“Expectation versus reality. What she claims to be ideal is probably different from reality.”

“Woah, that’s deep, from you.”

Tayeon grinned, pleased by Sunny’s compliment. “Thanks!”

“But still. Trust me when I tell you that Tiffany is into you. No one would talk about panties like that. No one. And you said she asked you to treat her to dinner, right?”

Tayeon nodded slowly, her mental processor cranking into action, thinking thoughts.

“I don’t know...we met under such...crazy circumstances. And we met again under even crazier moments. I don’t know how she can still be interested in being more than friends after all that shit.”

“You forget, she’s a plumber’s daughter. Clogged toilets are a dime a dozen. She’s probably seen hundreds and yours definitely wouldn’t be the worst.”

Tayeon perked up at a certain memory. “She did say that exact same thing to me before.”

“See? I’m right. She can handle all kinds of shit, including yours.”

“Maybe you’re right.” Tayeon breathed slowly as the possibilities suddenly seemed possible.

“Scratch the maybe. I *know* I’m right. She’s probably expecting something from you during this dinner.”

“Expecting? What?” Panic surged from nowhere and crashed onto her once peaceful shores of calm.

“Relax. What I meant was Tiffany is probably treating it as a date.”

“A date?” Tayeon gulped. The pressure was on, very suddenly. Dinner was fine. But a date?! A date

wasn't so simple. A date was a lot more complicated.

"Taeyeon..."

"Huh?"

"Stay calm."

"Okay."

"You've gone on dates before. You can do this."

Taeyeon took deep breaths and calmed down. "You're right. I can do this. I can."

Sunny finally smiled and patted Taeyeon's shoulder. "You'll be okay. Trust me."

Taeyeon nodded. If there was anyone she could trust, it was Sunny. Sunny knew her shit.

~

The day of 2027 came way too quickly and Taeyeon was a little nervous. Prior to the dinner, however, there were the two lectures and she would have to focus on learning something rather than worry about the impending dinner date. So between her attempts to focus on the lecture and worries about her dinner date, she'd totally forgotten about a certain someone and got the shock of her life when the certain someone plonked herself down on the seat next to her in 2027.

"Taengoo!"

Taeyeon yelped and jumped in her seat. "Yul! What are you doing here?"

Yuri rolled her eyes. "I told you I was crashing. You need to cover me, okay? Just in case your nutty prof decides to ask me some random question."

"Hi, Yuri."

"Hi, Noeul."

"Don't worry, we'll cover you."

"Thanks, Noeul." Yuri grinned and nudged Taeyeon surreptitiously. "Noeul's such a great friend, isn't she?"

Taeyeon blinked. What was wrong with Yuri today? Noeul has always been a good friend but Yuri had never taken much notice of her, much less saying things like that. But this wasn't the place or time to grill Yuri about it. Later.

"Where's Jessica."

Taeyeon rolled her eyes. Yuri was quite incorrigible at times. Like now.

"You're never this early for a lecture."

Yuri glanced at her sporty-looking watch and grinned. "I'm only ten minutes early. Ten minutes for a sleeping beauty is well worth my time, I'd say."

"Sleeping beauty?"

Yuri nodded. "Jessica's nickname. Don't you know?"

"How'd I know?"

"You lunched with sleeping beauty's best friend on Monday and you're going to dinner with her tonight. You should know these things."

"We didn't talk about sleeping beauty."

"Tsk, tsks." Yuri shook her head and gave Taeyeon a stern, chiding look. She threw her arm around Taeyeon's shoulders and leaned in, whispering in her ear, "You need to know all about her friends and stuff if you want to woo her. It's a given."

Taeyeon blinked. Woo? Did she want to woo? Yuri patted her shoulder and released her before sliding further down her seat to prop her well-toned legs on the seat in front.

A soft voice spoke just then, "Who are you having dinner with?"

Taeyeon turned to her right and smiled at Noeul. "Tiffany."

Noeul's eyes widened significantly. "Tiffany...? As in the TA?"

Taeyeon grinned and nodded.

"When did you become friends with her?"

“Friends? Mmm...I’m sure when we started becoming friends exactly but I met her two weeks ago, just before the start of this semester.”

“Before?”

“It’s a long story,” Yuri chimed in suddenly, “and your time has just run out. Lecture’s starting.”

Taeyeon looked to the front and sure enough, the prof and his two TAs had already entered the premises, five minutes early. The mere sight of Tiffany livened her and her spirits rose high. Tiffany looked extra lovely today, in a red, leopard-print dress that ended high up on her thighs. Red. Tiffany’s preferred colour. And she began to understand why too. Red contrasted well against her fair skin and made her look absolutely fabulous. Her lipstick red was young and bright, matching the dress perfectly. Long hair with luscious curls framed her beautiful face. Suitably accessorized with a few rings and bracelets, Tiffany was a gorgeous picture to look at. A living picture of beauty.

“Breathe, Taengoo. Remember to breathe,” Yuri teased.

“I’m breathing.”

“Just saying.”

“What about your sleeping beauty?”

“She’s so beautiful.”

“Your jaw, Yul. It’s dropping.”

“It’s not.”

“Just saying.”

Yuri snorted. “You little punk.”

“Why are you suddenly interested in her anyway?”

“Remember the party where you got left behind?”

Taeyeon nodded. “Yeah, how could I forget,” she replied, dryly.

“I was looking for a toilet but found her instead.”

“It doesn’t sound romantic at all, Yul.”

“Pssh. What do you know. She was sleeping when I saw her. The light from the corridor shone on her face and I thought I had seen an angel.”

“Wow. Sounds like you’re in deep.”

Yuri grinned. “Not that deep. But deep enough to be interested. Besides, I’m tired of going out with girls who adore me. I need something new. Something else.”

“Someone who isn’t fawning over you?”

“Precisely.”

Taeyeon shook her head at her friend. Yuri was too popular for her own good. Outgoing, outspoken, fun-loving and adventurous, she was the girl whom everybody wanted to date. If there were a poll for a ‘Miss Ideal Date Partner’ Yuri would win it. Hands down. No doubt.

Jessica. The girl who made Yuri crash a lecture. She was worth checking out. Decked out in a simple white top and faded jeans, Jessica had a very different style from Tiffany but was no less striking. She was fair too. Her golden brown tresses suited her and her fringe flopped lazily over her forehead, looking soft and silky like the rest of her hair. Her features were quaint and she looked altogether delicate and a tad fragile. She could see why Yuri liked her. They were opposites and opposites were always intriguing.

Intriguing. Hmm. Tiffany had used it on her. Intriguing. Was it because they were opposites too?

Her eyes shifted across the front of the lecture theatre and found Tiffany’s unexpectedly. The shock jolted her into straightening her back and as she looked, Tiffany winked at her. It was a quick wink. A quickie. But a wink nonetheless. And suddenly, the entire lecture theatre fell away from her peripheral and she had trouble breathing.

Holy shit.

SHIT 10

A slow trickle of warmth started from the deepest recesses of her tummy and crept up to her cheeks. Taeyeon couldn't blink. Couldn't think. Couldn't speak. Tiffany had already turned away but she was still caught up in the moment. A nosy elbow was prodding her arm but she didn't respond. The elbow grew more and more insistent until she couldn't ignore it anymore and turned to her left to stop the perpetrator.

"Yuri!" her fierce whisper was kept to a minimum but heads turned and faces frowned and she sank low in her seat. As low as she could. But not low enough. Not. Low. Enough. Six feet under wouldn't have been low enough as far as she was concerned but one single smile saved her. Tiffany's. Tiffany's big, bright smile. She caught it, a beam of light shining through the dark, and clung on to it and all was alright again.

A long, deep sigh made her turn to Yuri. "What."

"You're a goner." Yuri pulled a mournful look and clapped her hand over her heart. "Goodbye, my friend. I will miss you dearly."

"What are you talking about?" Taeyeon frowned. Yuri could spout the most nonsensical things at times. Like now.

"You've lost your soul to Tiffany."

"No, I haven't."

Yuri snorted and Taeyeon thought it was rather unbecoming of an attractive girl like Yuri. Yuri snorted at her way too often. If the school population ever saw the side of Yuri that she saw, half of Yuri's admirers would disappear in an instant. But they didn't. And Yuri continued to be popular. Very popular.

"If the girls you're going out with ever get to hear your snort..."

"They'd think it's sexy as hell."

Taeyeon couldn't help it. She snorted.

Yuri grinned. "Yours isn't half as sexy as mine," she patted Taeyeon's shoulder, "but you have your charms."

Taeyeon rolled her eyes. Charms? What charms?

Yuri prodded her arm. "What."

"Exactly. What."

"What what."

"You're confusing me."

"You're too easily confused, Taengoo."

Taeyeon was about to make a comeback when Yuri nudged her suddenly.

"What!"

Yuri winced and that's when Taeyeon realized just how quiet it was. No one was talking. Not even the prof. What? What? Yuri sat up straight, kicking her foot as she did and Taeyeon kicked back. It was their code for 'Shit, we're in trouble' and 'I know' and both of them braced themselves for what was to come.

"Are you enrolled in this class? I don't remember seeing you in the first two lectures." The prof's deep, booming voice hit them like a ton of bricks and Yuri kicked Taeyeon's foot again. This time, Taeyeon didn't kick back. No, she didn't even feel Yuri's kick. All of her senses had focused on one thing. Tiffany. Tiffany was glaring at her. Oh no, why was she glaring? Did she do something wrong?

"No, I'm not."

"Would you like to explain why you are in this lecture then?"

Yuri kicked Taeyeon's foot yet again (Help me!) and she kicked back (OK!). Her mind was in utter chaos, however. Yuri was in trouble! What could she do?

"Explain your presence in this lecture," repeated the prof. He didn't sound happy and Taeyeon swallowed hard. This was bad. Very bad. This prof wasn't like other profs who couldn't care less about who attended or did not attend their lectures. This prof was strict and firm and wasn't going to let this slide. What to do?!

Her brain went into overdrive and she was up on her feet suddenly, speaking before she could stop herself. "Sir, your lectures are effective and I've learnt a lot from you so I challenged my friend to sit in when she didn't believe me."

Taeyeon could feel all eyes on her, including Yuri's big, round ones. What? What? What did I just say?

"Ah, I see. You think my lectures are effective?"

Taeyeon found herself nodding and heard herself saying, "Yes, I do."

Much to Taeyeon's surprise, the prof broke into a big smile. "Well, in that case, your friend is welcome to sit in but no more chatting."

"Thank you, sir." Taeyeon didn't understand what had just happened but she wasn't about to question the prof's decision to let Yuri stay. Neither did she want to think about what Tiffany thought about her outright lie. All she wanted to do was kick Yuri really, really hard for getting her into trouble. So she did just that.

"Mmmnnngg!" Yuri made a weird guttural sound of pain and tried to kick back but Taeyeon foresaw what was coming and had already folded her legs on her seat, keeping them safe from Yuri. She grinned triumphantly at Yuri, satisfied that she got her revenge. She could feel Yuri's eyes boring holes into her but she ignored those eyes completely, focusing instead on the lecture that had continued.

There was a rustle of papers as Yuri rummaged her bag but Taeyeon's eyes didn't leave the screen. Until a note was slipped right under her nose. It read:

what was the kick for

Taeyeon looked at Yuri. But the girl's eyes were focused on the screen, mimicking what she just did. Incorrigible Yuri!

revenge

what?!?!

for making me lie for you

that's what friends are for TY

no

i'd lie for you

tiffany is pissed

like i said you're a goner

i'm not!!!

**if you're not you wouldn't kick me so hard
there's gonna be a bruise**

what. i have a strong leg that's all.

don't make me lol in here TY

don't you dare

are you daring me

Taeyeon shot her fiercest look at Yuri and scribbled like a woman possessed on the paper that was running out of space for scribbling.

are you here for j or not

Yuri straightened her back, nodded and crushed the paper in her fist inciting a small smile from Taeyeon. Yuri, Yuri, Yuri. So full of shit.

~

“Bye, Yuri. Bye, Taeyeon. I’ll see you soon,” Noeul said as she made a quick exit. Taeyeon and Yuri smiled and waved goodbye in return. The lecture finally ended and they were packing up when Yuri asked, “Where are you having dinner tonight?”

“Tony’s.”

Yuri raised her brow and a knowing grin stretched from ear to ear. “Sounds good.”

“Really?”

Yuri nodded. “It’s a nice place. I went there with Sooyoung last week.”

“Good for a first dinner date?”

Yuri indicated a thumbs up and Taeyeon beamed. Getting the thumbs up from Yuri was a huge boost of confidence for her since the girl had so much experience in dating. It was like getting the stamp of approval from a dating guru and that meant she was doing it right. But before she could thank her guru

for making her feel better, she'd already been abandoned by her.

Taeyeon watched as Yuri sauntered down the steps to the front wishing she could do the same. But she didn't have Yuri's wonderful height and figure so it probably wasn't a good idea to try. Instead, she walked down the steps the way she always did and sat on a seat just behind Yuri to wait for Tiffany who was busy packing papers that were strewn across the table by the prof during the lecture. She kept her eyes on Tiffany, hoping to get a look or a glance in but Tiffany didn't look up from her papers at all. Meanwhile, Yuri wasted no time.

"Hi, Jessica," greeted Yuri, wearing a smile that promised fun and adventure.

Jessica looked up from the stack of papers she'd been rifling through, eyes wide in surprise. She clearly wasn't expecting to be spoken to.

"Hi...do I know you?"

Taeyeon almost snorted but stopped herself in time. It wouldn't do to snort when her friend was trying to woo someone. Supportive was what she was supposed to be. Yeah, supportive. And that meant a straight face. No snorting.

Yuri put on her best smile. "I'm Yuri. I saw you at your house party."

"It's not my house party. And I wish they wouldn't hold them so often." Jessica scrunched up her nose and Taeyeon thought she looked cute doing that. "I lose sleep when they do." Wow, the sleeping beauty nickname definitely belonged to her.

"Actually, you were sleeping when I saw you."

Jessica looked a little alarmed and Yuri hastened to explain, "I was looking for the toilet when I found you."

"Oh. I see. In that case..."

Taeyeon blinked and stared. Jessica hadn't completed her sentence and instead, carried on rifling through her stack of papers, effectively ignoring Yuri in the process, after giving that monosyllabic-not-even-a-word response. Wow. She knew a couple of girls who would've given Yuri their most seductive smile and launched themselves at her, if given the chance, but Jessica had done none of that. Wow, Jessica.

Yuri seemed to be a little thrown off by Jessica's lukewarm response but she didn't show any signs of giving up. If anything, her resolve strengthened as her back straightened and she raked her fingers

through her hair, flipping it back like a shampoo model. That, Taeyeon knew, was Yuri leveling up her game. The hair flip would be followed by an intense gaze, a move that never failed to send a clear signal that Yuri was interested. But Yuri's intense, sensual gaze never got to stun Jessica for one simple reason. Jessica wasn't even looking at her. Oh, how easy it was for Yuri's move to fail, Taeyeon has never ever realized. Until now.

She was so enraptured Yuri's big fail that she didn't notice Tiffany passing her by. A hand clapped over her shoulder and she jerked, turned, looked.

"I'll take a while to be done. Do you want to meet me after I'm done to take a stroll before dinner or meet me straight for dinner?"

"A stroll would be great."

Tiffany nodded briskly. "I'll call you when I'm done. Wait for me."

"Okay."

With that, Tiffany flashed a quick smile and was gone and Taeyeon was left to wonder if that glare she had seen was a figment of her imagination or not.

~

"I can't believe Jessica totally ignored me."

Taeyeon patted Yuri's back comfortingly as they walked down the corridor to the cafeteria. "It's okay. It happens even to the best of us."

"Not to me, it doesn't."

"She's called sleeping beauty for a reason. She'd probably have more interest in you if you were a bed."

Taeyeon ducked right after saying that and Yuri's hand went swooshing over her, catching nothing but air. She grinned, stuck out her tongue at Yuri, and ran for it but Yuri was too quick for her and soon, she was caught in a stranglehold and begging for mercy.

"Take that back, if you wanna live."

"I take nothing back," squawked Taeyeon, trying to wrestle herself out of Yuri's iron grip.

Yuri sighed, rapped the back of Taeyeon's head with her knuckles and let her go. "You've got some

guts, my friend."

"Thus, worthy of you, my friend."

Yuri grinned and ruffled Taeyeon's hair. "You're about to be very useful to me, my friend."

"What."

"Help me."

"Huh."

"You're dining with sleeping beauty's best friend tonight."

"What do you want me to do?"

Yuri's grin stretched even wider and clapped Taeyeon on her back. "Just a tiny favour, Taengoo. Just a *tiny* favour."

~

Taeyeon had a cup of fruit juice with Yuri and they chatted for a bit before Yuri had to leave. She'd decided to walk in the general direction of where Tiffany was when the said girl called her and arranged to meet her at the school gate. They met, smiled, and began walking down the road, crossing it to get to the shops on the other side.

"Is it tough being a TA?"

Taeyeon wanted to kick herself as soon the question left her lips. What sort of a conversation starter was that! Couldn't she talk about something other than work?

"It's quite alright."

"That's great."

"Mhm."

And the conversation died. Yikes. Taeyeon didn't know what to say next and Tiffany didn't seem to be in the best of moods today. Oh no. Oh no. Oh no. Then, an idea struck her. Yes! There was something she could talk about.

“Is Jessica your best friend?”

“Yes, she’s one of my closest friends.”

“Why does she sleep so much?”

Tiffany giggled. “She’s a human koala, that’s why.”

“I’ve never seen a TA sleeping on the job and getting away with it.”

“Jess has her ways.”

“She’s very pretty.”

“It’s not just her appearance that wins her points on the job.”

Opps. Tiffany didn’t sound too happy. Taeyeon sneaked a peek. Tiffany didn’t *look* too happy either. She gulped as her heart raced. Things weren’t going so well.

“I’m sorry. T-That’s not what I meant. It...It came out wrong.”

“Taeyeon, it’s alright. You don’t have to apologize.”

“I don’t want you to misunderstand. I wasn’t thinking of anything when I said it.”

“I understand. Relax.”

“Okay.”

~

As they walked along the street (awkwardly, in Taeyeon’s opinion), they passed by a lingerie shop and Tiffany announced that she wanted to shop in it. So, of course, Taeyeon followed, her heart thumping hard at the thought of Tiffany in lingerie.

She tried to breathe evenly but Tiffany’s scent was overpowering her senses, sending her sense of smell into seventh heaven while her brain tried to grapple with imagination that was running wild and loose in the lingerie shop. Meanwhile, her hairs stood every time their arms brushed and her ears sighed at the sound of Tiffany’s husky voice. All in all, she was bordering on turning into a nervous wreck.

Hang on! You can make it! A little voice yelled from the inside. Yes. Yes, she could. She would. Just

like Sunny had said.

So, after taking a deep breath to calm her nerves, she browsed through the extensive collection of lingerie in the shop and found herself walking towards a pastel pink coloured bra that was striped like a candy cane and picking it up to admire it.

“I thought you prefer blue and purple.”

Taeyeon jumped in her skin at the sound of Tiffany’s voice in her ear and turned, candy cane bra in hand.

“I prefer blue and purple.”

“So what are you doing with this?”

Taeyeon looked at the candy cane bra in her hand and answered, without much thought, “I think you’d look very nice in it.”

She blinked as Tiffany giggled and squeezed her shoulder. Then her heart skipped a beat as Tiffany whispered, “Patience, Kim Taeyeon. We aren’t there yet.”

Tiffany patted her shoulder twice before moving on to browse through other shelves of lingerie and Taeyeon remained rooted to her spot, arm frozen in mid-air, candy cane bra still in hand. That was most definitely a come-on from Tiffany, wasn’t it?

The answer seemed to be a yes and she had trouble breathing yet again. She looked at the pink candy cane bra in her hands.

Candy cane will never be the same again.

Holy shit.

SHIT 11

How Taeyeon got through the rest of the shopping, she'd never know. But she managed to, somehow. She wasn't sure if she was happier or more nervous to arrive at Tony's and as they entered the place, she could've sworn that everyone knew how chaotic her inner thoughts were. Candy canes, pink, clogged toilets, diarrhea, Tiffany, strict professors, incorrigible friends, baby blue panties, pink panties, pink bras, were tossed about in her mind like unsecured luggage in the boot of a car on a bumpy road. Some of the chaos was bound to show in her eyes, right?

"This way, please," said the waiter who showed them to their table. As they walked over the plush carpet of the reception, past baroque-styled wallpapered walls and under chic, modern chandeliers to their table, eyes followed them. Upon sitting down on the gold-plated, red-cushioned chair that was her seat, Taeyeon also noticed the waiter's eyes flitting furtively between Tiffany and her. Why were the patrons and waiters staring at them? Not knowing the reason unsettled her.

Was it unusual for two ladies to dine at a place like Tony's? Why was he looking at them with suspicion? Tony's had been Sunny's recommendation and Yuri had given a thumbs up as well. Surely there was nothing wrong with her choice? Or was there something wrong with her? Maybe it was wrong of her to have improper thoughts of Tiffany in an alluring set of candy cane lingerie when she was in a place as posh as this. Yes. That must be it. Some of those improper thoughts must be showing. She'd better stop those thoughts.

Stop. Stop. Stop.

Stop and focus on the things that mattered. Like Tiffany.

"Taeyeon...?"

"Huh?"

"Something on your mind? The waiter has been trying to get your attention."

Taeyeon looked up at the waiter who was now looking at her with even more suspicion and coughed, awkwardness oozing from her every pore. "I...I was just thinking about some...stuff..."

"Okay...but would you like to have a look at the menu? What would you like to drink?"

Taeyeon blinked. Drink? Right. Yes. They'd have to drink something. Of course.

"Would you like some ice wine, Miss?" asked the waiter.

"Sure, thanks."

"Alright, that will be two ice wines for the lovely ladies."

Taeyeon stared as the waiter bowed slightly and left, relieved to have gotten through the ordeal. Boy, ordering a drink had never been so difficult before.

"I should've mentioned this earlier, but now seems like a good moment to say it."

"Huh?" Taeyeon was mystified.

"You're so pretty today. I like your fluffy pullover and cute little skirt. And did you do something to your hair? It looks different."

Taeyeon blushed. She had given her hair a few extra brushes, blown it dry and applied an expensive hair product that Sunny had given her to give it an extra sheen. Tiffany had noticed!

"I...I applied something extra...my roommate...she...said it would make my hair shine and look softer."

Tiffany giggled. "I put the same thing on my hair too. Do you like it?"

Taeyeon nodded as though her life depended on her head bobbing and smiled shyly. "You look exceptional today. Your red dress looks very good on you." Taeyeon stopped to swallow her saliva. "And...and your lipstick is a very nice colour too."

Tiffany giggled even more and looked pleased for her smile was radiant. "I'm glad you noticed." But she looked down and fiddled with the end of her fork suddenly. "I wore it for you."

"Your red dress?"

Tiffany smiled and nodded.

"Why?" blurted Taeyeon, and the urge to kick herself had never been stronger. What a stupid question to ask!

Tiffany's eyes widened marginally for a split second before narrowing into intimidating slits. "Are you seriously asking me why?"

Taeyeon decided there and then that words weren't her best friends because they liked to desert her in her greatest hour of need and leave her mouth hanging open, looking stupid.

"Most people would want to look good on a date, don't they?"

"Yes, of course, they would." Taeyeon felt more and more stupid with every word that left her lips but she had to say something, didn't she?!

"So if you had to ask, does it mean this isn't a date? Because this is a pretty posh place to go to if it isn't a date."

Holy macaroons, Sunny was right! Tiffany *did* treat this dinner as a date. Thank goodness she had listened to her.

"This *is* a date."

Tiffany's stance relaxed almost immediately and her eyes softened into fluffy marshmallows. "Good to know we're on the same page."

Taeyeon smiled, relieved that Tiffany had calmed down, just as the waiter returned with their wines.

"What will you be having for dinner?" he asked pleasantly.

Taeyeon shifted uncomfortably when the waiter raised his eyes from his notepad, looked at her and flashed a charming smile. Why was he smiling at her like that? Meanwhile, Tiffany was glaring at the waiter. It was the same glare that Tiffany had given her during the lecture and she could be sure now, that she hadn't imagined it. But why was Tiffany glaring at the waiter? And why did she receive the same glare in the lecture? Taeyeon was clueless.

"I...I'll have the loin steak. Medium rare."

"Good choice, Miss. Pretty girls like you have pretty good taste."

Taeyeon was thoroughly confused when Tiffany's glare intensified tenfold but the waiter appeared to be unperturbed as he turned to Tiffany to take her order.

"I'll have the same thing as her," said Tiffany, sounding curt.

The waiter nodded, scribbled quickly, then turned back to Taeyeon and asked, "Would you like a glass of red wine to go along with your loin, Miss?"

Taeyeon smiled, "Can you recommend a red wine to compliment my steak?"

The waiter flashed a charming grin and said, "It would be my pleasure to recommend the Cabernet

Savignon to a lovely lady like you, Miss."

"Tiffany, would you like one as well?" Taeyeon asked, despite feeling a little nervous about Tiffany's mood.

Tiffany nodded so Taeyeon turned back to the waiter and said, "We'll both have the same wine, thank you."

"What a flirt," said Tiffany with a frown as soon as the waiter was out of earshot.

"Who?"

"That waiter. Who else?"

"Oh." Taeyeon relaxed instantly. For a minute, it had seemed as though Tiffany was angry with her over something. "Yes, he is."

"If I weren't worried about what he'd do to our steaks, I'd have told him to stop looking at you like that."

"If you aren't happy about it, we can go some place else," Taeyeon suggested. The last thing she wanted was Tiffany feeling unhappy about anything.

But Tiffany simply smiled and shook her head gently. "It's alright. Let's not ruin our dinner because of a flirty waiter."

"Okay." Taeyeon smiled. "The steaks here are supposed to be really good anyway."

"They are."

"You've eaten here before."

"Yes."

"Oh." Taeyeon felt a little disappointed. She had hoped that Tony's would be something new and interesting to Tiffany.

"But coming here with you is different," added Tiffany.

Taeyeon perked up at once and grinned. "Really?"

"Yep."

"Okay."

Taeyeon smiled at Tiffany over the candlelight and Tiffany smiled back, and for a moment, her world was just two. Taeyeon. Tiffany. And nobody else.

~

They were served promptly. The waiter returned with a basket of bread rolls and little slabs of butter and placed it between them. Taeyeon was feeling quite ravenous by then and dug into them like a bee to honey. But she froze, her teeth sunk deep into a bread roll, the corners of her lips glistening with oily butter, when Tiffany giggled suddenly. Her eyebrows arched as Tiffany's eyes curled into crescent moons that twinkled, questioning the reason for Tiffany's amusement.

"I've never met anyone like you."

Taeyeon stared. "Mmm?" she responded, her mouth full of bread.

Tiffany giggled again and moved her jaws as though she were chewing. "Chew, Taeyeon."

Taeyeon obeyed and Tiffany giggled some more.

"You're adorable."

A hot and cold sensation streaked through her body from head to toe and left her grinning like an idiot.

"I...don't know what to say..."

Tiffany smiled. "You don't have to say anything. I was just thinking out loud."

Eyes still locked on Tiffany, her arm moved on its own accord and flipped the cloth covering the bread basket. She took another roll of bread, still smiling like an idiot and put it on her plate. But Tiffany's lovely smile turned into a look of horror and she screamed, "Taeyeon!"

Huh? What? What?

Tiffany was flapping her napkin at something flickering. Taeyeon looked and gasped. Holy cow! She had flipped the cloth onto the candle flame! The cloth was on fire!

Emergency! Red alert! Put out the fire!

Taeyone grabbed the nearest glass of water and tossed it on the burning cloth, but instead of extinguishing, the flames exploded into even larger ones.

"Taeyeon! That was wine!" shrieked Tiffany.

OH SHiT!

By then, the patrons nearby had backed away as waiters rushed to their table with jugs of water which they threw over the flames. Shrieks and screams filled the air and Taeyeon was shocked beyond words. She...she had started a fire in a lovely steakhouse while on a first date with Tiffany. Nothing...nothing could get worse than this. Yet, there was nothing she could do to help, she thought miserably, other than standing to the side, watching the waiters as they did their best to get the situation under control.

After a few jugs of water doused the flames, calm was somewhat restored in the restaurant. But the charred bread basket cloth, tablecloth, bread and pools of water surrounding them were horrid, incessant reminders of the mess and trouble she had caused.

"I'm so sorry," Taeyeon apologized profusely to the manager who had stepped forward to ensure that they were alright. "I'll pay for the damages."

"It's alright, Miss. It was an accident."

"But...but the tablecloth...the basket..."

"Don't worry about it. They can be easily replaced."

"I'm really, really sorry..."

"Apology accepted." The manager smiled kindly. "Would you like to continue your dinner at another table?"

"I'm so sorry..."

"Miss, you've apologized enough. Accidents happen all the time when you're in this line. We've seen entire stacks of plates crashing onto the floor and trust me when I tell you that this isn't the first fire we've seen in this place either."

Taeyeon took a deep breath and tried to stop herself from apologizing again.

The manager then smiled kindly and said, "My waiter will show you to another table."

Taeyeon didn't know what to say. She was touched and thankful for the manager's kindness.

"Thank you," was all she could manage and the manager smiled.

"You're welcome."

~

Taeyeon didn't touch any of the bread after that. All she did was sip at her wine while they waited for their steaks. Tiffany wore the most unusual smirk on her face the entire time. It looked as though she were holding something back but Taeyeon wasn't sure what.

"Aren't you going to have anymore bread?"

Taeyeon shook her head vehemently. "No. No more bread...no more for me..."

As soon as her reply left her lips, Tiffany broke into giggle after giggle, a whole series of them, unstoppable, uncontrollable.

All Taeyeon could do was stare. "What?"

Tiffany was almost in tears, she was giggling so hard. She shook her head, tried to stop giggling, but failed as her giggles took over again. The waiter arrived with their steaks and Tiffany was still in giggles. All Taeyeon could do was wait. Wait for Tiffany to stop giggling. Wait for the steak to be served. Wait for the burning shame and embarrassment to fade away. Wait for a miracle that would reverse everything so that her very first date with Tiffany wasn't an utter failure.

Something that Tiffany had once said floated into her mind just then.

"Shit happens but we flush it away with good things."

Sigh.

Now, shit had happened, but where were the good things to flush it away with? Nowhere to be found as usual. On top of that, she had to deal with a date who either glared or giggled for a reason she couldn't phantom and best friends who were going to laugh at her messup rather than comfort her.

This, ladies and gentlemen, was her wonderful life.

Shit.

SHIT 12

Tiffany managed to stop giggling to eat her steak eventually and Taeyeon was most relieved when they began eating peacefully.

“How’s your steak?”

Taeyeon looked up from her plate and grinned. “It’s very good. Do you want to try some?”

Tiffany giggled. “Taeyeon, I’m having the same thing as you.”

“Oh.” Taeyeon blushed. “Right. Yes, I forgot.”

“But you never know,” added Tiffany with a slight curl of her lips, “Yours might be different. Let me try a small piece.”

“Okay.”

Taeyeon cut a small piece of her steak and was about to put it on Tiffany’s plate when she opened her mouth and looked at her expectantly. Taeyeon hesitated for the slightest of a second before realizing Tiffany’s intent and moved the steak to her mouth instead. Her arm seemed steady enough and she was immensely thankful that her thumping heart didn’t show. Or least, she hoped it didn’t. Tiffany’s lips closed around the steak and pulled it off the fork slowly and Taeyeon licked her lips unwittingly.

That was...she was...Tiffany had just...

Before her thoughts could clear up, Taeyeon found herself staring at a piece of steak inches from her lips. Tiffany had done the same for her.

Holy shit.

“Ah...” went Tiffany and Taeyeon’s jaw dropped open obediently. She pulled the steak off Tiffany’s fork and chewed numbly as Tiffany’s twinkling smile sent more flutters down her esophagus after her steak.

“Does it taste the same?”

Taeyeon couldn’t feel or taste anything but she nodded anyway.

“Taeyeon, are you okay? You’re turning red.”

“It’s the wine.”

“But you’ve only had a glass.”

“They say it has something to do with my blood circulation.”

“Well, it’s a good thing I left my car at home though. I’m planning on having a few more of these,” said Tiffany, her finger tapping and gliding along the edge of her wine glass. Taeyeon’s eyes were glued to her finger, then her curling lips, then her smoky gaze. How was it possible for anyone to make everything she did or say, look and sound so sexy? Taeyeon didn’t know the answer to that and she was sure she wasn’t going to find out anytime soon either. Not that she needed to know. Yeah, she didn’t.

“But before I order anything else, I need to set something straight,” continued Tiffany.

“Huh?”

“We’re going dutch, right?”

“Dutch?” *The Netherlands? What?*

“Dutch. You know, as in splitting the bill...”

“Oh, *dutch*.” Taeyeon could feel her cheeks warming up again. Gosh, could she be any sillier than she already was? “I thought I was treating you to dinner though.”

“Yes, well, when I asked for a treat I wasn’t expecting to come to such a posh place. And it’s too much for me to expect you to pay for this meal. It’s gonna add up to quite a bit.”

“But...”

“You can treat me to burgers or something the next time, alright?”

The next time? There’s going to be a next time? She’s not freaking out after I set the table on fire?

“Uh...okay. Burgers *and* fries.”

“But no more fires, okay?”

Taeyeon ducked and blushed as Tiffany giggled at her expense. She was surprised to find that she was alright with it, though. It was totally fine for Tiffany to laugh over it. It was nice.

“Okay.”

~

A waiter walked up to them as they were finishing their meal and asked if they like a picture taken of them. They looked at each other and knew at once that their answer would be a resounding yes.

“Alright, please lean forward and smile,” said the waiter as he aimed the polaroid camera at them.

Taeyeon put on her best smile and held it until the flash went off. She was about to relax when the waiter told them to pose for a second picture. One for each of them. So Taeyeon leaned forward again and smiled. But this time, her smile froze and she had to fight to keep her eyes on the camera. No, she wasn’t going to be caught staring at Tiffany’s hand on hers. No, no, no. Eyes on the camera please. Eyes on the camera...*flash!*

Phew. At last. Now she could look. *Ohmagarrrrdd*. Tiffany’s hand was on hers, that unmistakable warmth was soft and gentle on her skin. And Tiffany wasn’t letting go even after the picture was taken. What? What? Taeyeon didn’t dare to move her hand, for fear of Tiffany letting go so she kept her arm frozen in place, all the while melting in the heat of Tiffany’s warm hand.

There was a phrase for this sort of thing. There was a phrase for it but Taeyeon couldn’t remember what it was. She’d probably have forgotten her own name as well if Tiffany kept her hand on hers for the rest of the dinner. And it was all very nice but she couldn’t finish her steak with one hand. She needed one hand for her fork and another hand for her knife. But she didn’t want to take her hand out from under Tiffany’s. Decisions, decisions.

Taeyeon decided she would eat the rest of the potatoes first. That way, she didn’t have to use her right hand that was on the verge of detaching itself from her body and floating into seventh heaven.

“By the way,” said Tiffany, most casually, as though putting a hand over Taeyeon’s was the most natural thing in the world to do, “I must say you were pretty quick in coming up with something during 2027 today.”

Taeyeon could barely manage a grin. “Desperate times, desperate measures.”

“How did you know that the prof loves to be praised?”

Taeyeon shrugged. “I didn’t know. I just said the first thing that came to my mind.”

Tiffany giggled. “Well, it worked. You have no idea how good his mood was after that. He even let

Jessica and I off work early.”

Taeyeon brightened at once. “So I have him to thank for the extra time.”

“Extra time?” Tiffany’s eyes shone in the candlelight.

“The extra time we had to window shop.”

“It was fun, wasn’t it?”

Taeyeon nodded. “It was.”

“We should do it more often.”

Taeyeon nodded more vigorously. “We should.”

Tiffany’s eyes spoke a dozen different languages that Taeyeon couldn’t decipher and she found herself falling into the dark swirling pools that were beckoning her to swim in.

“Aren’t you ever going to finish your steak?”

Taeyeon tore her eyes away from Tiffany’s and looked at her plate that was now devoid of potatoes and vegetables. Just the loin steak remained, the one thing that she needed both hands to eat with. Argh.

“Oh, I’m so sorry. I didn’t realize.” Tiffany lifted her hand from hers and Taeyeon almost whined but thankfully, she didn’t. Instead, she picked up her knife and cut her steak up nicely to be eaten.

Meanwhile, Tiffany ordered another glass of wine for herself and asked for more water for Taeyeon. And by the time Taeyeon was done with her steak, Tiffany had emptied her glass of wine. Wow. That was quick.

They called for the bill and true to her words, Tiffany paid for her share. The waiter left with the bill and they were about to leave the table when the manager appeared.

“Here are your polaroids, I hope you had a good meal and a wonderful time. We look forward to seeing you here again.”

The manager handed them their polaroids which were mounted on an elegant postcard that bore the restaurant’s logo. It was a very nice touch and Taeyeon was extra delighted to receive the second polaroid in which Tiffany’s hand touched hers.

“Thank you very much for your wonderful service,” Taeyeon thanked the manager, wanting to say more but knowing there were no words that could truly express how thankful she felt. Instead, she offered her hand and shook hands with the manager. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Please do come again.”

“We will, most definitely,” said Tiffany with a warm smile and Taeyeon’s heart thumped extra hard at the thought of coming back here with Tiffany one day.

~

Dinner was done and they stood at the steps of the restaurant, not really knowing what to do next. Taeyeon couldn’t stop her lips from lifting at the feeling of Tiffany’s arms linking with hers. She wasn’t sure if it was the wine that was drawing Tiffany closer to her or if it was something else but she wasn’t about to complain about anything at all.

“Where shall we go?”

“Where do you live? We can stroll back to your place if it isn’t too far to go on foot.”

Tiffany pouted and Taeyeon almost died.

“I don’t want to go back so soon.”

“Okay...”

“Let’s go to a cafe.”

Taeyeon perked up at the thought and nodded. “I know a nice cafe we can go to.”

Tiffany giggled and squeezed her arm. “Lead the way, Taeeyeon.”

So Taeyeon led the way.

~

“You like dogs, right?” Taeyeon asked, just in case she somehow got it wrong but Tiffany affirmed it by nodding.

“I love dogs!”

“So you should like this place,” said Taeyeon as they came to a stop in front of a cafe with dark tinted glass windows. “Bau House!”

“What’s inside?” asked Tiffany, peering through the glass.

“It’s a dog cafe. Have you heard of it before?”

“I’ve heard of it, but never been to one.”

“I’m sure you’ll like it very much.”

Taeyeon led Tiffany into the cafe and smiled at the lady who was manning the counter. “Noeul Look who I brought!”

Noeul looked quite surprised but smiled nonetheless. “Welcome to Bau House! What would you like to drink?”

“I’ll have a banana yoghurt smoothie,” replied Taeyeon before turning to Tiffany who was hugging her arm tightly.

“A strawberry smoothie, please.”

Noeul nodded and punched some buttons on the cash register. “Please wait over there for your drinks,” she said, gesturing towards the other end of the counter before turning to the next customers who entered the cafe.

Taeyeon and Tiffany moved, and looked at the lively dogs as they waited.

“There are at least twenty types of dogs in here.”

Tiffany’s eyes pierced hers. “You seem to know a lot about this place.”

“I used to work here, that’s why.”

“With Noeul?”

“Yes.”

“For a long time?”

“Just the summer and winter breaks and sometimes when they need someone to cover a shift.”

“Have you known Noeul for long?”

“We were in elementary school together.”

“Oh...”

“What?” Taeyeon nudged Tiffany.

“You’ve known her for a long time...”

“Yes.”

The conversation died there but their drinks arrived and all was forgotten as they found a seat and started playing with a cute white pomeranian that pranced up to them with its tongue hanging out.

Taeyeon had the time of her life with Tiffany as they played with dog after dog and got their pictures taken with many of them. Tiffany even showed her pictures of her dog, Prince and Taeyeon too, showed her pictures of her dog, Ginger. They agreed to let their dogs meet one day and Taeyeon was excited at the prospect of their dogs becoming friends. But time flew by quickly and soon the cafe was about to close.

“I’m sorry we’re closing but please come again another day.” Noeul smiled as she picked up their empty cups.

“Thanks for the treat, Noeul,” said Taeyeon.

“It’s on the house, Taengoo, since you work here anyway, but Tiffany will have to pay for hers I’m afraid.”

“It’s okay, I’ll pay for it.”

“Tiffany, no, it’s my treat.”

“Alright, if you say so.”

“That should be 7000won,” mumbled Taeyeon as she dug into her little black bag for cash. “There you go, thanks Noeul.”

“See you in class tomorrow, Taengoo.”

“See you!”

~

Tiffany insisted on walking home with Taeyeon. According to Tiffany, her home was just a little further down so it made no sense for Taeyeon to walk back. And it was only at the very last moment as they stopped at the stairs that led to her apartment that Taeyeon finally recalled the favour that Yuri had asked her for.

“Tiffany...”

“Hmm?”

“I know this will sound weird, but do you mind giving me Jessica’s number?”

Tiffany blinked and released her arm which she had been holding all this time.

“Jessica’s number?”

Taeyeon nodded. “Please?”

“What do you want Jessica’s number for?”

“Uh...well...you see...”

“Jessica is the one you like?”

And it was Taeyeon’s turn to blink. “What?”

“You came out with me just to get Jessica’s number from me?”

Tiffany’s voice was increasing in pitch with every word she said and Taeyeon was desperate to explain herself.

“No, no, no. No!”

“What then? Why are you asking for Jessica’s number? You didn’t even ask for *my* number.”

“It’s not for myself. It’s for Yuri!”

“Yuri?”

“My friend, Yuri. She...”

“Oh, was she the one who crashed our lecture today?”

“Yes.”

“So she’s the one who wants Jessica’s number?”

“Yes.”

“I see...”

Tiffany’s voice made a gradual return to her normal pitch and Taeyeon was relieved. The last thing she wanted was a pissed off Tiffany on her hands.

“You see, Yuri saw her at the house party we met at and crashed 2027 to have a chance to talk to her but she didn’t really seem to...respond much when Yuri approached her...”

Taeyeon waited nervously for Tiffany’s answer. It was hard to read the expression on Tiffany’s face. It could be anything from amused to pissed off and she didn’t want to piss Tiffany off again if she could help it.

“I’ll give you Jessica’s number on one condition.”

“What is it?”

Tiffany grinned slyly and whipped her phone out before tapping on it rapidly. Then, she lifted her phone and flashed the screen at Taeyeon.

“I’ll send you her number if you give me a goodbye kiss before I go and a goodnight call before sleeping tonight.”

Taeyeon couldn’t quite believe her ears. When was the last time she had dug her ears? Or got them cleaned at the doctors? Were they clean? Or were they so stuffed with filth that she had somehow heard Tiffany wrong? A goodbye kiss? A goodnight call? What? What? *What?*

“Well...? What’s it going to be?”

“W-Where...should I kiss you...?” Taeyeon couldn’t stop her voice from shaking, as embarrassing as it was, but Tiffany didn’t seem to notice. Taeyeon’s breath hitched as Tiffany’s finger made for her lips

but exhaled in a rush when her finger swerved and ended up on her cheek.

“Right here will do,” said Tiffany cheerfully, her eyes twinkling like the stars above them.

“Okay.”

Taeyeon stretched and rose on her toes a little to press her lips onto Tiffany’s cheek gently.

“Goodbye,” she whispered as her lips left her warm cheeks.

“Bye, Taeyeon.” Tiffany’s smile was most radiant right then. “I really enjoyed myself with you today. Thanks for giving me such a memorable date.”

Taeyeon blushed and said nothing for she was sure that she’d squeak or make some silly sound if she tried.

“Remember to call me before you go to bed.” Tiffany smiled and waved.

Taeyeon smiled and waved back before turning around to face the stairs. The stairs were something that she’d trudge up after a long day at school or a long day at work but not tonight. It was as though the stairs were escalators tonight as she practically breezed up the six flights of stairs like a fairy on a cloud. And as she stood in front of her door, keys dangling from her fingers, Tiffany’s wise words resounded in her mind.

Shit happens but we flush it away with good things.

Good things...good things indeed. Tonight was officially the best night of her life.

Holy shit.

SHIT NO 13 'COS IT'S FRIDAY AND IT'S BAD LUCK!!

SHIT 14

“Did you score and do me proud?”

Sunny's merry voice greeted her, as soon as she stepped into their apartment.

“S-Score? No. No score. Zilch. Love. Zero. Nil.”

Taeyeon dodged Sunny's eyes and tried look honest.

“So you two kissed! Where? Lips? Was it intense? Polite?”

“We didn't kiss!”

“Then, what?”

“I kissed her,” Taeyeon admitted at last, blushing inside-out.

“You kissed her, she kissed you back...yada yada yada...”

“Nooo, it wasn't like that. I kissed her cheek to say goodbye. That's all.”

“That's it?” Sunny looked disappointed. “I was looking forward to more action.”

“Hey, my life isn't a movie or drama you know.”

Sunny' giggled. “Sometimes, it's even better than one. So what else happened?”

“Well, Tiffany brought me into a lingerie store before—”

“Tiffany brought you into a what?!”

“A lingerie store...”

“Oh man, I think I like this girl. I can be her roommate instead?” Sunny batted her eyelashes and flashed a wide grin that would have sent any other human into spasms but Taeyeon had been living with her for so long that she was immune to Sunny's cutesy charms.

“Go ahead. I'm not sure if she'll play games and watch anime with you though.”

“Oh yeah,” Sunny agreed with a pout, “...it's hard to find someone like you...” Sunny frowned, thinking hard for a moment before snapping her fingers. “I know! I'll keep you as my roommate and make her a guest.”

“Best of both worlds huh. Well, bad news Sunny. It's me or her. I don't share.”

“You won't share me with her or her with me,” Sunny quizzed, tongue-in-cheek.

“Both. I'm a very selfish girl.”

“And how did dinner go for our selfish girl? Did she eat your food again?”

“We had the same thing. No sharing.”

Sunny threw back her head and opened her mouth wide as her laughter filled the room. In view of that, Taeyeon decided Sunny didn't have to know about the fire. She'd never hear the end of it if Sunny knew. Yes, some things were best left unsaid.

“Glad to have been your larger-than-life sitcom tonight, but if you'll excuse me, I have to take a shower and go to bed.”

Sunny was too busy laughing to stop her and she made her escape successfully. Yay.

~

Taeyeon hopped into the shower and gave herself a good scrub. She whistled a merry tune and hummed yet another happy song while in there. She was on top of the world. Even a fire couldn't stop her. Muahahaha. And she got to kiss Tiffany! Oh her heart. Her poor heart had almost lost it when her lips touched Tiffany's cheek. Gosh. Did her insurance cover 'death by Tiffany'? Probably not huh. It would be really hard to classify such a death. Not exactly natural, neither was it a disaster nor an accident. Gosh.

And it wasn't even over yet! She had a goodnight call to make! She grinned as her head tilted backwards to rinse the shampoo under the shower. Then, she looked at her phone, sealed within a Ziploc bag. Very soon...Tiffany's voice was going to come through her phone and into her ears. Oh yes. Ooh yes!

She stopped the water and stepped out of the shower to dry herself. Then, with a fluffy towel wrapped around, she got out of the bathroom and sat on her bed to dry her hair. She got up to blow dry her hair and when it was finally dry, she whirled around to her bed where her phone was awaiting her.

“Come to me baby!”

She ran, jumped and landed on her bed with a bounce, giggling but horror gripped her in the next instant as she saw her phone bouncing off the edge of her bed. She stretched, reached and managed to catch her phone before it hit the ground. Phew! But relief flooded her only for a split second before turning into a sharp pain as she slid off her bed and fell onto the floor with a resounding thud.

“Oww...” she groaned.

She heard the running of bare feet and her door opening.

“Taengoo! Are you alright?”

Sunny was here to rescue her. Thank goodness. Taeyeon winced as Sunny helped her off the floor and rubbed her forehead. It was numb at first but feeling returned gradually and it wasn't good.

“Oww! Oww!” yelped Taeyeon as Sunny rubbed the spot where her forehead had hit the floor.

“Stay here, I'll get the ice pack.”

“Okay.”

Sunny came back with an ice pack within seconds and put it gently on her forehead.

“What happened to you? How did you hit your forehead?”

Taeyeon twitched. This was going to sound so stupid. Argh.

“I jumped onto my bed and the phone bounced off and I tried to save it.”

“And ended up hitting your forehead instead. Tsk, tsk. Taengoo, Taengoo...”

“I think I'm fine now, Sunny. I'll just lie down with the ice pack.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, just yell if you need me.”

“Okay.”

Sunny helped Taeyeon with her sheets and eased her into bed. Then, she surprised Taeyeon by kissing her on her cheek.

“Goodnight, Taengoo.”

Taeyeon blinked as Sunny giggled.

“Goodnight, Sunny.”

“Make sure you get a kiss from Tiffany the next time. Don't let me down.”

Taejeon smiled and nodded. “I won't let you down.”

Sunny giggled again before leaving the room and shutting the door. As soon as the door closed, Taejeon looked at her phone. Man, she had risked her life for this phone and she knew very well why. This goodnight call had better be worth it. Too bad Tiffany couldn't kiss her over the phone.

She took her phone out of its Ziploc bag and smiled at it. Her precious...oh...there was a message from Tiffany!

**here's jess' number. I'll be waiting
for your call!(!:**

Taejeon's grin stretched from east to west in one huge curve.

It was time to make the call.

~

She took a deep breath and was about to make the call when her phone rang. Her finger froze, a mere inch from tapping Tiffany's contact and swiped her screen instead.

“Taengoo!!! Tell me you got it!!!”

“I got it.”

“YES!!!”

“I'll send it to you now.”

“Aww, you know I didn't call you just for this. Was it good? Tony's has the best steak and ambience, right?”

“She's been there before...but we did enjoy the steak.”

“Ooo...she's been there before huh. I wonder how many people have brought her there before.”

“Yul, you're not helping.”

“Hahaha, okay, okay. I'm happy for you, girl. You should take the chance to call her or something. Start

chatting on the phone, you know. It's better than messaging.”

“I was about to call her when you called.”

“Ooo!!! Taengoo!!! You got the moves, baby. Okay, I won't hold you up anymore. But remember to send her number before you call. Who knows how long your conversation will go on for and I'll just die if I have to wait too long.”

Taeyeon snorted. Yuri and her dramatics.

“Okay.”

“Seduce her with your sexy voice. Bye!”

“Bye.”

Taeyeon was turning red. Sexy voice? Seduce? She wasn't sure who had the sexier voice and who was going to do the seducing when it came down to it. A few taps later, Taeyeon could imagine Yuri hopping like a bunny gone wild and poor Sooyoung and Seohyun having to be in the same apartment as her. Now...it was her turn. Call Tiffany.

BEEP! BEEP!

Shit. Her phone's battery was depleting soon. She'd better charge it before making the call.

Don't wanna embarrass myself again. No, no.

But she couldn't find her charger. Oh gawd. What was this shit?

“Sunny! Have you seen my charger?”

“I borrowed it. Left mine at Sooyoung's place.”

“Can I have it back? My phone's dying.”

“Okay.”

Taeyeon took the ice pack and cleaned it before returning it to the freezer while she waited for Sunny.

“Er...Taeyeon...?”

“Yes...?”

Taeyeon had a sinking sensation in the pits of her stomach when she saw Sunny's apologetic expression.

“I'm so sorry, I think I left it at Hyoyeon's.”

“Nooo...”

“Do you need it urgently?”

Taeyeon sighed and shook her head. She didn't want Sunny to feel bad about it.

“It's alright. I'll just...send a message...” she trailed off when her phone's screen died.

Shit.

SHIT 15

“What do I do? What do I do?”

“I'll get your charger back from Hyoyeon tomorrow. Don't fret.”

“But...but...”

“Take a chill pill. You look like you're about to combust.”

Taeyeon whimpered. She was in deep shit now. Tiffany was going to think she was a liar through and through. Her head and shoulders drooped and she returned to her bedroom, defeated. Her life as she knew it was over. Tiffany wasn't going to speak to her again.

She slumped onto her bed, face down. Her world was sinking, rainbows fading, stars dimming, winds dying.

~

She groaned, rolled over, groaned again, rolled over again, groaned yet again, roll over yet again. She was never going to be able to fall asleep like that. Pulling the covers over her head, she willed herself to sleep but a sudden idea struck her and had her hopping out of bed in a split second.

Dashing out of her bedroom, she yelled, “Sunny!!!”

“What? What?” Sunny was up on her feet, looking her up and down in surprise.

“Lend me your phone,” Taeyeon asked desperately.

“Okay...sure...” said Sunny, looking confused as she handed her phone over. “Why do you need my phone so badly?”

“Tiffany...”

“Huh?”

“I need to call her.”

“What?”

Taeyeon shook her head and stepped back into her room. “It's a long story. Next time.”

“You owe me the full story, Taeyeon.”

“Okay.”

Sunny nodded, looking satisfied and turned back to their couch where a game was on pause. Taeyeon knew that Sunny would probably play till the wee hours of the morning like always. Tsk, tsk. Constant late nights were bad for her skin but Sunny wasn't the sort who really cared about such things. Anyway...

She shut her door and returned to her bed to swap SIM cards. Card out of her phone, into Sunny's phone, switch on. Yes! At last!

Please don't be mad...please don't be mad...pleaseeeeeeeeeee...

“Your call will be directed to a voice message. Please record your message after the tone...”

BEEP.

Taeyeon stared at Sunny's phone in disbelief. Did she call somebody else by mistake? No. It was Tiffany. It said so on the screen. Tiffany Hwang. What? Why?

She called one more time and got the voice message again. Oh no. What did that mean? Tiffany was most definitely angry with her, right?

Shit.

~

School on a Saturday morning had never been such a pain in the ass. Life had never sucked this much. She barely managed to get any sleep and arrived for her ten o'clock class with panda eyes, looking like a frump.

“Taeyeon! What...what happened to you?” Noeul gasped, plainly shocked to see her friend looking so dishevelled.

“Had a rough night.”

“What? Why?”

“It's a long story.” Hah. Long stories were becoming her life now. Long, looong stories.

“Well...?”

Taeyeon sighed. “Okay...”

She related the entire incident to Noeul, from the Yuri's request to the date, to Tiffany's request and her subsequent misfortune.

“Wow...that's...”

“Premium shit. I know.”

Noeul put her arm around Taeyeon and patted her shoulder. “I'm sorry things messed up for you. Did you manage to call her this morning?”

Taeyeon shook her head miserably. “She wouldn't answer,” she sighed, and sank lower and lower down her seat.

Noeul patted the back of her head and ruffled her hair a little. “Aww, don't be sad...I'll treat you to icecream after this, okay?”

Icecream!

Taeyeon perked up at once. “Okay!” she said, a little smile gracing her features.

Noeul giggled and patted her head a few more times. “See? I know you best.”

“Sunny knows me best.”

At that, Noeul frowned a little. “But I treat you the best, don't I?”

Taeyeon pressed her lips together, deliberating the fact a little before smiling and nodding. “Yes. You treat me the best. You're a great friend, Noeul.”

Noeul smiled rainbows and sunshine.

~

Noeul brought her to Jen & Berry's after class. It was Taeyeon's favourite icecream and impossible for her to continue mopping when her mind was focused on selecting her favourite flavours.

“We'll take the jumbo.”

“Yay!” cheered Taeyeon. She watched with glee as the icecream was scooped into a jumbo cup and was almost skipping for joy when it was handed over to her.

“Let's sit over there, that corner.”

Taeyeon headed over immediately and set the icecream on the table. Noeul joined her after paying for the icecream and brought two spoons with her.

“Silly, you didn't even take a spoon. Are you planning on licking it all up?”

Taeyeon grinned as she took a spoon. “Licking? Why not. I'm sure my tongue can handle it.”

Noeul laughed. “I'm sure, I'm sure.” Then, she smiled and squeezed her hand as she said, “Taeyeon, you're so great to be with.”

Taeyeon thought Noeul sounded a little weird but she was more interested in the icecream than anything. So into the chocolate and strawberry she dug and there was no turning back.

~

“Feeling better?”

Taeyeon nodded and rubbed her belly. Noeul hadn't eaten much of the icecream so it was pretty much a solo act for her and she was stuffed.

“Great. Unfortunately, I have to go home now. We're visiting my grandparents to have dinner with them and you know how long it takes to go back to that home.”

“Oh, you'd better get going then.”

“Taeyeon.” Noeul sounded so serious all of a sudden that Taeyeon stared, wondering what was up.

“Don't let Tiffany get you down. Remember, I'll always be here for you. Text me, okay?”

Taeyeon smiled gratefully and nodded. “I'll text you.”

“Alright, gotta go.”

“Bye Noeul.”

“Bye, Taeyeon.”

~

Taeyeon was strolling back home from Jen & Berry's, feeling relatively better, when a clench startled her. A squeeze. A quick tightening. Oh no. Bad news.

She quickened her strides and hastened for home. Not a moment to lose.

~

It seemed to her that the world enjoyed working against her. She could state many examples:

- Never seeing a taxi available for hire when she needed one, then having a whole fleet of them pass her by when she didn't.
- Buses and trains enjoyed waiting till the last moment to leave, when she was just a few steps away from reaching them.
- The rain never chose to fall when she carried a raincoat or umbrella, but would most certainly drench her in a torrential downpour when she didn't.
- The sun never chose to shine when she brought a pair of shades or cap out with her but would bake her with a vengeance when she didn't.

But none of those were as critical as this moment—having the door refuse to cooperate with her keys when her rear muscles were on the verge of losing the long fought battle.

“Can you believe this?!”

She could hear Yuri's voice in her apartment. *What is she doing here?* Her key finally slipped into the keyhole and she turned it, desperate to get in.

“Hey! You're back!” Yuri chirped but Taeyeon was in too much of a hurry to stop and say hi.

“Taeyeon, Taeyeon, why are you always in a hurry for the toilet when you get back?” teased Sunny but Taeyeon ignored her too.

She dropped her bag in the living room and bolted into the bathroom, nearly ripping her pants off in her haste to let it all out. But at last, with her pants and panties around her ankles, she relaxed and let go.

“Ah...yes...holy shit...”

She'd made it.

~

She'd made it was she wasn't feeling so good. After spending an inordinate amount of time sitting on her toilet bowl, she'd flopped onto her bed, cradling her belly.

Oww...

Sunny tucked her into bed after rubbing some ointment on her belly. It warmed her up and made her feel better.

“Thanks, *unnie*.”

Sunny grinned. “Good thing your humour wasn't flushed down the toilet with your shit. I'll miss it if it was.”

Taeyeon smiled and closed her eyes. She knew she could always count on Sunny know what she needed.

“Rest well, Taengoo. Feel better soon...” added Yuri as they shut her door.

Taeyeon grunted and the door clicked shut.

~

A gentle touch aroused her from sleep but she didn't want to wake up so she grunted and tried to push whoever's hand it was, away. It worked. Good. She turned her head and continued to sleep.

“Taeyeon...?”

Mmm...what a nice voice...

“Taeyeon, are you awake?”

I'm dreaming, right?

“Taeeyeeon.”

Okay, this sounds way to much like real life talking. Or is this a lucid dream...

“Wake up...”

Still half-asleep and trying to return to slumberland, Taeyeon whined, “Why...”

“Kim Taeyeon, you're just as bad as Jess at waking up, oh my gosh.”

What?!

Taeyeon's eyes shot open and she turned her head towards the voice.

It was Tiffany. In the flesh.

Holy shit.

Outtake from SHIT 15

“Poor Taengoo. Having a tummy ache really sucks.” Yuri shut the bedroom door and followed Sunny to the kitchen.

“Tell me about it. But she shouldn't have eaten all that icecream.”

“You know Taengoo best. You know how inseparable she and icecream are.”

“Still...” Sunny shook her head as she set some water to boil in the electric kettle, “well at least she's gonna feel better soon.”

“You see, it's all the same. Taeyeon and her icecream, you and your games.”

“And now, you and Jessica.” Sunny's grin made Yuri pout.

“She's not bad for me.”

“Actually, I think you're right. She may be very good for you.”

“No, I wouldn't say that either. I don't think replies like that are good for my mental health.”

Sunny thought of the message in Yuri's phone one more time and laughed out loud. “Seriously. This Jessica person I've gotta meet. Hi, who are you? If you're selling something, I'm not interested. Sorry. HAHAHA!!!” Sunny's laughter climbed higher and higher and soon, she was literally squeaking; she was laughing so hard.

Yuri poked her sides and Sunny squealed. “Don't, she shrieked, “Don't!”

“I'll stop if you stop.”

“Okay,” Sunny held her hands up in surrender, “okay, I'll stop.”

“Now tell me what to do...” Yuri groaned.

“Do you really like her? Why are you trying to so hard?”

“I don't know if I like her, but I want to find out.”

Sunny shook her head again, taking out a chopping board and some vegetables. “I don't approve. She's not like the girls who hang around you, trying to get a date with you.”

“But that's precisely why I'm interested.”

“In the challenge? Aren't you going to end up playing with her feelings if you do that?”

Yuri fell silent for a moment. Then, she shook her head. “No, her feelings won't be messed with. I'm only trying to be friends. Maybe we can go out sometime, you know? But it's not like I'm going to date her then dump her or anything. You know that I wouldn't.”

“I just don't want you to start something and hurt someone unintentionally.”

“I'll bear that in mind. But I really want—”

Sunny's phone rang. She looked up and set her knife down. “Help me to pour the boiling water into a pot and dump the veg in. Medium heat.”

Leaving Yuri to her task, she went out to the living room and retrieved her phone from Taeyeon's bag. She walked back to the kitchen while checking to see who it was and if it was an urgent call. The name flashing on the screen surprised her a little. And if what Taeyeon had been like last night was any indication at all, this would be a call that needed to be answered—at least to Taeyeon it was.

“Who is it?” Yuri asked, taking a couple of strides to get to Sunny's side. She looked. “Oooh hohoho, what do we have here? A lovergirl calling our lovergirl. Answer it, Sunny. We can take a message.”

Sunny thought it was a good idea so she answered the call. “Hi, Tiffany.”

Tiffany sounded a little thrown off. “Oh, er hi. I'm looking for Taeyeon?”

Just then, Yuri began waving her hands around, gesturing wildly. Only, Sunny couldn't understand a word of what she was signalling; charades had never been Yuri's strength. She covered the mic of her phone and spoke in a loud whisper, “What!”

Using the same loud whisper, Yuri replied, “Tell her your toilet is clogged again. Get her over here.”

Sunny's eyes lit upon the enlightenment. That was a good idea!

“I'm Taeyeon's roommate.”

“Oh, hi. Is Taeyeon there?”

“She's—actually, Tiffany?”

“Yes...?”

“You're the one who fixed our toilet the last time, right?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Well, that's great. Could you come over? Please? Our toilet is clogged again.”

“Again? Are you kidding?”

Sunny sighed for added effect and pulled a sad face. “I'm afraid not. There must be something wrong with it. Please help us. We'll pay you, of course. Standard rates apply.”

“Well, alright. I'll need some time to get there though.”

“We'll wait. Thank you, Tiffany.”

“You're welcome.”

Yuri poked her arm, her eyes shining like the mid-day sun, her grin, impish. “She's coming?”

Sunny nodded and Yuri raised her hands in triumph. “See what good friends we are.”

“Taeyeon is too slow. She needs this.”

Yuri nodded. “I couldn't agree more.”

~

The doorbell rang soon enough and the two girls looked at each other. Giggling, they got off the couch and made their way to the door.

“Hi, Tiffany,” Sunny greeted with a bright smile.

“Hi, Tiffany!” Yuri chirped.

Tiffany shifted her eyes to Yuri and narrowed them. Yuri wasn't sure why, but she backed away when Tiffany approached her.

“You're Yuri.”

“Er...yes?”

“You have Jessica's number.”

Yuri coughed, feeling awkward all of a sudden.

“I'm watching you.”

Yuri blinked and took another step back. “I...”

“Would you like to put your bag down? It looks heavy.”

Tiffany turned to Sunny. “Where have I seen you before...?”

Then, it was Sunny's turn to panic. She'd forgotten all about the love survey she'd done on Tiffany! Uh oh! Cover blown! Mission abort!

“Er...I just remembered, I need to go out and see someone to get something back. Yuri, I need you to come with me. Tiffany, there's a pot of vegetable soup cooking in the kitchen. Bring it to Taeyeon when she's awake. She had a really bad stomach ache and is resting right now. Thanks!”

She grabbed a stunned Yuri as she fired her words like a machine gun and made for the door even before Tiffany could react. The last thing she heard was a loud and surprised 'What did you say?' but she was out even before she had time to answer. Oh boy, how wrong could a plan like this go? So wrong. So, so wrong.

Shit.

SHIT 16

It really was Tiffany. But how in the world...?

“Am I dreaming?” she asked in disbelief, not realizing that she had said it out loud.

“Do you need a pinch?”

“Huh?”

Tiffany reached for her cheek and gave it a good pinch, making Taeyeon yelp. “Oww!”

“You're not dreaming, Taeyeon.”

The pinch was real. The voice was real. But still...

“Are you real?” she asked, stretching her finger and prodding Tiffany's arm with it. “Ohmaagaaarrdd...” she gushed, “You're real.”

“You're so silly,” giggled Tiffany, shaking her head. “Are you feeling better now?”

Taeyeon could only nod.

“Sit up, then. You need to drink this soup before it turns cold.”

Taeyeon sat up, still stunned, and took the bowl of soup from Tiffany. She recognized it. It was Sunny's vegetable soup—good for stomach aches. And things only got more and more confusing for her. Why was Tiffany here? Where was Sunny and Yuri? And why was Tiffany giving her Sunny's soup?

“Where did Sunny go? And Yuri?” asked Taeyeon, before sipping the soup. Ah...as good as always. Sunny's soup was the best.

“They said they had to go somewhere really urgently. Someone they had to get something from.”

Taeyeon snorted. What a load of bull. She knew what her friends were up to now and she wasn't sure how she felt about the whole thing. Having Tiffany here was surprisingly pleasant but she didn't exactly want to look so frail and dishevelled in front of Tiffany either. However, it wasn't as though she had a choice in the matter. Things were, the way they were.

“Sounds like a big fat lie, huh.”

Taeyeon stared at Tiffany, relieved to see a grin stretching across her face.

“So why are your friends trying to get us alone, together?” Tiffany's husky voice crawled under her skin and gave her delicious shivers.

“They're up to no good, that's why.”

“Really...?”

Taeyeon nodded. “Especially Yuri. Pranks are her forte.”

“And she's the girl whom you gave Jess' number to.”

“Don't get me wrong, Yuri's a great person.”

Tiffany shrugged, looking nonchalant. “I gave her a warning before she left anyway.”

Taeyeon blinked and swallowed hard. Why did Tiffany sound scary when she said that? She could only imagine how scary Tiffany was when she failed to call her last night. Oh no.

“Why do you look so afraid of me?”

Taeyeon bit her lip.

“Ah...the call that never came.”

“I called.”

“I waited two hours. Nothing.”

“I had some problems with my phone...but I did call. All I got was your voice message though.”

“Some problems huh.”

Taeyeon nodded. “And I called this morning too. But you didn't pick up the call.”

“Sorry about that. I was still angry.”

“Oh...”

“I called you back after I cooled off but Sunny answered.”

“Sunny?”

“Uh huh. That's why I'm here now.”

So that's how everything went down. Taeyeon understood now.

“But you know what?” ask Tiffany.

Taeyeon raised a brow, shook her head.

“None of it matters.”

She couldn't agree more and nodded vigorously to show it.

“Right now, I'm more interested in knowing what got you sick like that.”

“Oh...I think it's the icecream.”

“Icecream can make you sick?”

“I ate a jumbo at Jen & Berry's. Probably a little bit too much for my tummy to handle.”

“You ate a jumbo all by yourself?”

“I had to,” Taeyeon protested. The last thing she wanted was Tiffany thinking she was a glutton or something. “Noeul didn't eat her share so I had to finish it or it'd go to waste.”

“Noeul?” Tiffany questioned, her voice sounding almost an octave higher than usual. “You went out for icecream with her today?”

Taeyeon nodded. “After class. I was feeling kinda down so she treated me to icecream to cheer me up.”

“Why were you feeling down?”

With a jerk of her head, she gestured at her phone on the table.

“Oh...”

“I was sure that you'd be angry. That maybe you wouldn't wanna speak to me and we couldn't be friends anymore.”

Her lips curled down but turned back up when Tiffany smiled and said, “Silly, I wouldn't stop talking to you because of this. You're making me sound like a scary, bad-tempered person.”

“You got pissed pretty quickly when I asked you for Jessica's number.”

Tiffany shifted a little, casting her eyes onto her lap. “Well, that's different.”

“How is that different?”

“I felt cheated.”

“Didn't you also feel cheated when you didn't get my call?”

“Well...a little...but I didn't think you are the sort who doesn't keep promises. Although I did get tired of waiting and went to sleep in the end...”

“I'm sorry.”

Tiffany shook her head. “Oh my gosh, why are we talking about this again. It's not important. What's important is you. I want you to get better quickly.”

Taeyeon rubbed her belly and grinned. “I'm feeling better already. Sunny's soup is really good.”

“In that case,” Tiffany patted her thigh and stood up, “I’ll get going.”

“Already?” Taeyeon pouted.

“Homework.” Tiffany grimaced and she did the same. She had homework too. Shit. “See you Monday?”

“Monday? Are we meeting on Monday?”

“Unless you don’t wanna have lunch with me.”

“Oh.” Taeyeon blinked furiously. “Right, lunch. Yes.”

“And you still owe me a phone call. Two now, with interest.”

“I’ll call you. I promise.”

Tiffany smiled with her twinkling eyes and all was right with the world again.

“I’ll try to be a little bit more patient this time.”

Taeyeon cheered mentally but froze when Tiffany’s index finger pointed at her without warning.

“But don’t push your luck, Kim Taeyeon.”

She swallowed hard and nodded, determined to fulfill her promise as soon as she could this time. Upon seeing Tiffany turn to leave, she put the empty bowl aside and hurried to get out of bed but Tiffany spun around and pushed her back onto the bed.

“Rest. I’ll let myself out.”

So Taeyeon stayed in bed and dreamt of rainbows, butterflies and kisses in the light, cool breeze.

~

It was past dinner time and Taeyeon was eating a pot of ramen that she’d cooked for herself when Sunny returned home.

“How did it go with Tiffany? Did you get a kiss from her?” Sunny’s cheeky grin made her blush as she shook her head.

“She gave me the soup you made and left after I finished it.”

“Taeyeon, to think I went through all that trouble for you...” Sunny wore a look of disappointed that Taeyeon knew was just pretend so she decided to play along.

"I'm sorry, I've let you down. Please forgive me, oh mighty Sun!"

"Don't worry, you're still my favourite roommate." Sunny tossed a phone charger onto her bed.

"Besides, I owe you."

"My charger!" Taeyeon grabbed it and held it as though it were the most precious thing in the world.

"Thanks, Sunny! Now I can call her."

Sunny grinned. "Go get her."

~

"Hello!"

Taeyeon froze for a moment. That was the most upbeat greeting she'd ever heard over the phone. Wow.

"Hello...? Taeyeon, are you there?"

"Er, hello Tiffany."

She could hear Tiffany giggling and blushed. She was embarrassed that her blush was so quick to come but she took comfort in the fact that it couldn't be seen over the phone.

"Are you all tucked into bed and ready to sleep?"

Taeyeon looked down at herself, snuggly under her covers, leaning against her pillows propped against the headboard.

"I am."

"You look so adorable when you're tucked in. Just like a little girl."

She squirmed. Tiffany's words were teasing and she could almost see the twinkling eyes and friendly smile of hers.

"I'm not adorable."

"You are! You're very cute."

"I'm not cute."

“Don't people tell you that you're cute all the time?”

Taeyeon shook her head before realizing that Tiffany couldn't see her over the phone. “No.”

“Oh come on. That's a lie and you know it.”

“Sunny is cute. I'm not.”

“Who's Sunny?”

Taeyeon was confused. “Didn't you meet her today? She's my roommate.”

“Oh...*Sunny*...”

“Yup.”

“Sunny *is* cute,” Tiffany giggled again, “...but I think you're cute too. Just another kind of cute.”

“A weird kind of cute?”

“Yeah! A weird kind of cute,” laughed Tiffany. “I can't believe you'd describe yourself like that. So cute.”

Taeyeon cringed and said nothing. She didn't like cute.

“Is your stomach alright now?” Tiffany stopped laughing eventually and managed to ask.

“It's good now.”

“That's great.”

Taeyeon could hear the smile in Tiffany's voice and smiled too.

“Thanks for coming today. I...I was very happy to see you.”

“Well,” Tiffany giggled, “...you do know that I didn't actually go over to see you, right.”

“What do you mean?”

“Ask your roommate. Or Yuri.”

“Sunny didn't ask you to come because I was sick?”

“No.”

Tayeon groaned. What did her friends do? What trick did they play this time?

“It doesn't matter though. Your friends are cute too. I like them.”

“Yeah, they're great friends.” *Even though I want to kill them right now.*

“I'm glad we're friends too.”

That put a wide smile on Taeyeon's face. “Me too.”

“So lunch on Monday at the same burger place?”

“Okay.”

“Alright, it's getting late. You'd better rest. Goodnight, Taeyeon.”

“Goodnight, Tiffany.”

Taeyeon's grin was wider than ever as the call ended. Monday! Lunch! Good things...good things were flushing all the shit away.

No shit.

SHIT 17

Remember to eat your fries XP

Taeyeon nodded in all seriousness upon reading Sunny's message. Yes, she resolved to eat all of her fries this time. One had to learn from one's mistakes. Her plan was to start on her fries even before they got to their table.

“Someone's hungry today,” Tiffany commented as she wolfed down her fries like a hungry alligator.

Taeyeon shook her head, mouth full of fries and kept chewing. She had but one objective:

Finish her fries.

“Oh my gosh, Taeyeon, slow down.”

Taeyeon didn't slow down. She chewed quickly and stuffed fry after fry into her mouth. Then, it happened. A fry went a little too far into her mouth and triggered her gag reflex.

Uh oh.

She froze, her jaw locking up and with great effort, summoned all her self-control as she tried her best not to panic and end up spitting all her fries out from her mouth.

“Oh my gosh, oh my gosh. Are you okay?” Tiffany leapt from her seat and moved to pat Taeyeon's back.

Chew slowly...move that fry over...okay. Okay. I'm okay now.

Luckily, the fry was maneuvered into safer territory and she was able to smile again.

“Mrm oge,” she replied.

“Please slow down. You might choke again if you don't.”

Worry was written all over Tiffany's face so she slowed down. “Don't worry, I'm okay now,” she assured Tiffany, after swallowing the mouthful of fries, “and I'll slow down.”

“Why are you eating so fast? Are you very hungry?”

Taeyeon wasn't going to reveal the real reason so she opted for the vague grunt and head movement.

“Why are you so hungry? Didn't you take breakfast?”

Taeyeon swallowed another two fries before answering, “Woke up too late.” At least this much was true.

“Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. You gotta take it.”

Taeyeon gaped. “Wow, you sound just like my friend when you say that.”

“Who?”

“Seohyun.”

“I'd like to meet her one day.”

“You probably won't like her too much.”

“Why not?”

“She has a huge thing against burgers.”

“I'm sure we can put our differences aside and let our similarities bond.”

“Okay, I'll introduce the two of you when there's a chance. She's housemates with Yuri and another two friends. So you should get a chance.”

“Are they the ones who were at that party with you?”

Taeyeon blushed at the thought of *that* party. She really hadn't been at her best that night.

“Yes, I went with them. But not Seohyun. Seohyun doesn't really go to parties. She's too busy for them.”

“Too busy?”

Taeyeon nodded. “She's taking a double major and ahead by two semesters. Her work load is insane.”

“She sounds like a beast.”

“She is.”

“Luckily for me, you're not.”

“Huh?”

“If you were a beast like Seohyun, you wouldn't have time to have lunch with me.”

Tiffany's cryptic message boggled her mind and her easy smile did strange things to her heart, making it flop this way and that.

Omaggarrd.

“Hello? Cat got your tongue?” Tiffany teased, when Taeyeon failed to reply.

“No...no, it's just...I was confused...”

“Confused? With?”

“What you said.”

“What *I* said?” Tiffany blinked, her turn to be confused. “I didn't say anything confusing, did I?”

“I-I don't...I don't know,” Taeyeon stuttered, feeling more unsure of herself than ever.

“Taeyeon, do you have something to say to me or ask me?”

She shook her head. No way was she going to jeopardize the situation by saying anything more. But Tiffany sighed and she wondered why.

“Normally, I'm a pretty patient person, but my patience is running thin this time. Do I really have to come out and say it?”

Taeyeon blinked. “Say...what?”

“Taeyeon, I think I've made it clear enough. The ball's in your court now. Friday, 2027 is the deadline. I don't think I can wait any longer than that.”

Deadline? What? What's going on? And why is Tiffany standing up?

“Tell me what you want on Friday. I'll be waiting.”

“Where are you going?”

“I need the bathroom.”

“Oh.”

Taeyeon's jaw hung loose as she followed Tiffany with her eyes. Thoughts flew wild in her mind and for a moment, it seemed clear. Tiffany wanted to know if she was interested. Right? But that would mean Tiffany was interested in her. Was that even possible? Or was she over thinking it.

Sunny. She needed to consult Sunny on this. Only Sunny would know how to clean this load of shit up.

Tiffany returned to their table after some time but was quiet from then on. They ate in silence, each deep in their own thoughts, until their food was gone.

“It was great having lunch with you but I have to go back to work. See you Friday.”

“Okay. Friday.”

Tiffany smiled and hugged her, surprising her yet again.

“Bye, Taeyeon.”

“Bye, Tiffany.”

~

Taeyeon grabbed Sunny the moment she got home and sat her down. She told her everything, from A to Z, as Sunny listened.

“Of course she likes you,” said Sunny at the end, “Are you dense or are you dense.”

Taeyeon frowned. “I'm not dense. I'm just being careful.”

“I think it's obvious enough, Taeyeon.”

“Remember the time I thought Jieun was into me? Turned out she was only being friendly.”

“Well, Jieun didn't issue an ultimatum, did she? But Tiffany did. She wants an answer. Yes, you like her too, or no, you only want to be friends.”

“Okay. You got a point there.”

“Of course I do.”

“Okay, okay. No need to rub it in.”

“So what's your answer gonna be?”

“I don't know.”

“You don't know?” Sunny's voice was just as capable of rising an entire octave in a split second as Tiffany's was, thought Taeyeon. “Why wouldn't you know?”

“I'm a little scared.”

“What are you scared of?”

“Tiffany.”

“You're kidding, right?”

“She's pretty scary at times.”

Sunny narrowed her eyes for a moment before surprising Taeyeon by nodding in agreement. “Actually, you're right. She has her scary moments.”

“You've seen them?”

“She was kinda fierce when she told Yuri she's watching her.”

Taeyeon's eyes opened wide. “She told Yuri that?”

“Quite protective of her friend, isn't she.”

“They're pretty good friends. Like you and I.”

“If that's the case, I approve. Not that I didn't before,” said Sunny before leaning forward to add, “So? What will it be? A yes or a no?”

Taeyeon bit her lip. Deep down inside, she knew that she wouldn't be able to say no to Tiffany. It was

definitely much harder to say no than to say yes. The thing was actually saying it out loud, to Tiffany, with Tiffany right in front of her. Her brain never seemed to function as well when she was with Tiffany and the last thing she wanted was to mess it up again.

"I know you're gonna say yes." Sunny grinned and patted her shoulder. "Go for it, Taengoo. I have faith in you."

Right. Sunny had faith in her. Sure. No sweat. She could do it. No pressure at all.

~

Tuesday went by in a blur. Homework consumed most of her time and gaming with Sunny took up the rest. Wednesday was project day with Noeul in the library.

"I was thinking we could do an analysis on the narration using internal and external focalization," Noeul suggested.

"Sounds good."

Soon, they were hidden behind stacks of books, then huddled behind Noeul's laptop. They worked well together, having known each other for so long and it didn't take too much time before they had done up several pages of notes and accumulated some samples to back up their points.

"I think we're good for today," said Noeul.

"Yeah, we have enough material to start on the essay. Shall we split it up and do our parts separately?"

"I'll do external focalization if that's okay with you."

Taeyeon shrugged. "No problem."

"This is why I love you so much," said Noeul with a big smile.

"Huh?"

"I mean, you're so easy to work with. You're a great partner."

"Oh." Taeyeon smiled, pleased to hear Noeul's praise. "You're a great partner too."

"Really?"

Taeyeon nodded. “Yes. Really. I'd rather be your partner than be somebody else's.”

“I'm really happy to hear that. I'm glad we can work together so well. Not all friends can do that.”

“Well, since we're done here, do you wanna grab dinner with me? I'm really hungry right now.”

Noeul's lips curved into a shy smile. “Are you asking me out on a date?”

Taeyeon's jaw fell open. *What?*

“I'm so glad you asked,” continued Noeul, “I really like you, Taeyeon. Of course I'll have dinner with you.”

Her mind was popping like crazy. What was Noeul talking about? Did it mean that Noeul...no. No, no, no. No way. They'd been friends for so long. Noeul had always been soft-spoken and shy so this couldn't be a joke. But what was this? How did she go from nothing but toilet troubles to an ultimatum and a confession in a week? Her mind was having trouble coming to terms with reality and the tricky situation she was in. What was she to do now? She didn't know. But she knew one thing.

She knew shit.

SHIT 18

“That wasn’t what I meant...” said Taeyeon, her voice small, tensing even more when Noeul put her hand on hers.

“Can we be more than friends?”

“Uh...Noeul...I...I’m not—” Taeyeon was cut off abruptly when Noeul began laughing hard. “Wha...t?”

Noeul laughed so hard that tears were forming in her eyes. “Just kidding, Taeyeon,” she said, still laughing, “You should’ve seen your face. Oh...so priceless.”

Taeyeon blinked, thinking fast. She wasn’t entirely convinced by Noeul but there wasn’t anything she wanted to change. Noeul was probably looking for a way out and she wasn’t about to wreck it. Playing along was the best option. So, she laughed too.

“You got me.”

“I did.”

“Never thought you’d pull something like that on me.”

“Once in a blue moon.”

Taeyeon laughed. This was awkward.

“Anyway, I can’t do dinner with you actually. Mom’s expecting me for dinner today. Sorry.”

Taeyeon was relieved. “Oh, that’s okay.”

“So I’ll see you at 2027.”

“Yeah.”

“Okay.”

~

Taeyeon decided not to tell anyone about Noeul’s pseudo-confession. She thought it was for the best and Noeul didn’t need to be embarrassed any more than she already was. She hoped it wouldn’t be too awkward with Noeul. Awkward was awkward. She was bad at awkward.

Thursday zipped by, mostly spent on the essay for 2027 and before she knew it, it was Thursday night. That’s when she began to feel nervous. Not only did she have to give Tiffany an answer, she also had to worry about seeing Noeul again. She wasn’t sure about anything and it made her worried.

However, there were things in this world that could flush it all away and make her feel better.

Goodnight! rest well (:

Just like that.

But how should she reply to Tiffany's message? She decided to keep it simple.

gudnight♥

She hoped the heart wasn't over the top. Was it? She squeezed her eyes shut and sent it. There. It was done. It was time to sleep.

~

Taeyeon peeped from behind the door of the lecture theatre. Was Noeul in there? If she was, she'd act like everything was normal and sit beside her. That was the plan. But she wasn't in there. In fact, she hadn't come at all. And with the double stress of wondering where Noeul was and how she was going to tell Tiffany about how she felt, she felt drained by the end of the lecture. Strung out too.

Tiffany was her usual self, doing what she had to do for the prof, clicking on the slides to facilitate his lecture. She hardly ever glanced up, but one time, their eyes met and Taeyeon was nothing short of electrocuted. Intense, focused eyes, perhaps due to the concentration she put in while on the job, stunned her. That single look shook her to her core and robbed her of every coherent thought in her mind.

By the end of the lecture, she was a fumbling mess, unsure of how things were going to progress from here. She remained in the theatre until it was empty. Then, it occurred to her that it was a little awkward for her to remain in it when no one else was, so she decided to wait outside for Tiffany, like she previously did to apologize. Once she stepped outside, she took deep breaths to calm herself.

This must be what crazy feels like. Omaaagaarrddd.

She leaned against the wall facing the theatre's door and tried to regulate her breathing.

Calm down, Taengoo. You can do it. You can say it. Say you like her. Say you wanna date her.

"Taengoo!"

A familiar voice brought her out of her self-encouragement mode and she jumped in her skin when she realized who it was.

"Noeul!"

"It's a good thing I got here in time," she gasped, trying to catch her breath.

"Noeul, what's going on?"

The breathless girl before her took a deep breath and straightened her back before staring straight at her with steely eyes.

“Taengoo, I want to take back what I said on Wednesday.”

Taeyeon stiffened at once.

“It wasn’t a joke. I really do like you and I want you to know.”

Taeyeon couldn’t do more than twitch. Her brain had gone into a kind of state of malfunction, incapable of processing the information that Noeul was giving her.

“But it’s okay if you don’t like me the same way. I want us to remain friends and not be awkward around each other because that would kill me.”

Wait. Hold up. This sounded positive. Perhaps there was some hope in this.

“Noeul...”

Her friend stood still, listening, awaiting her reply. It was time to be honest.

“I love you as a friend. I’ve known you for a long time and I want us to be friends for even longer.”

“Nothing more than that?”

Taeyeon knew that it was going to be painful but it was absolutely necessary.

“Friends,” she said, keeping her voice firm and steady.

“It’s Tiffany, isn’t it. You like her.”

Taeyeon bit her lip. It seemed a little cruel to confess her feelings for Tiffany to Noeul right at this moment but Noeul deserved an honest answer too.

“I feel something special for Tiffany but our friendship is just as precious to me.”

At her words, Noeul stepped forward and flung her arms around her.

“You’re a really good friend, Taengoo.”

Taeyeon closed her eyes and hugged her back, feeling glad that things were working out after all. Perhaps this was the good that followed the iiii. She finally smiled and opened her eyes but froze when she did. Tiffany was standing right there with a strange look in her eyes. Their eyes made contact and locked gazes. Taeyeon couldn’t look away, even after Noeul stopped hugging her.

“What are you looking at?” asked Noeul, turning around to see. “Oh. Hi, Tiffany.” She turned back to Taeyeon and smiled. “I’ll still see you tomorrow to do our essay, right?”

Taeyeon smiled and nodded. “Essay then dinner?”

Nodding like an excited kid, Noeul’s smile was bright and happy. “Okay. Bye bye, see you tomorrow.”

“Bye...”

Noeul smiled at Tiffany as she left and Taeyeon tensed as Tiffany drew closer to her.

“Take a walk with me?” Tiffany asked in a soft voice.

“Okay,” croaked Taeyeon.

~

They walked across the grass in the open space in front of the building they were in. Students were milling around, some waiting for friends, some waiting for the shuttle bus. There was a booth where students were handing out free bottles of a new drink they were promoting and a long line of students snaked from it. They walked right past all that and headed for a quieter area in campus.

All the way, Taeyeon wondered what Tiffany saw and heard back outside the theatre. Tiffany didn’t appear to be unhappy or angry, which was a relief, but she couldn’t figure out why Tiffany had that strange look in her eyes. What did that look mean?

“Just so you know, I heard what you said at the end,” said Tiffany, breaking the silence between them.

“You did?”

“Yes.”

Taeyeon’s heart beat doubled right then and she stopped walking. Tiffany realized she wasn’t walking anymore after a couple of steps and turned back to face her. There was a smile on Tiffan’ys face that, for some reason, made her heart thump even faster.

“So you finally came out and said it. I’m very happy. And I think you said the right thing to Noeul too.”

“You are? I did?”

Tiffany nodded. “Rejecting a good friend is the hardest thing to do but you handled it well.”

“I’m...I’m relieved.”

Tiffany smiled and gave Taeyeon a hug. It was a comforting hug and Taeyeon felt better after that but Tiffany didn’t let up on the intensity of the moment.

“Can we stop playing games then?” she asked, her eyes unwavering.

Taeyeon blinked. Games? She hadn’t been playing any games.

“I’m not playing games...”

“Maybe it’s just me then. It’s been grey, between us and I don’t like feeling unsure about feelings. But after hearing what you said to Noeul, I know how you feel too, so we can stop playing games.”

“I guess, you’re right. I don’t like playing games either.”

Tiffany smiled, her face lighting up bright. “Let’s go out on a date then. A proper one. Not like the dinner that you owe me for spitting your drink on me. Not like the lunches that I had to corner you into having with me.”

“You didn’t corner me. I was happy to have lunch with you. I looked forward to it.”

“But I want a real date, Taeyeon. Would you go on a date with me?”

Taeyeon took a deep breath and tried not to flip. “Yes.”

Yes. Holy iiiii, yes!

SHIT 19

Taeyeon was a happy girl. Whistling as she showered, she took her time to clean herself. She didn't usually take long showers but today was different. Today was Saturday and she was going to see Tiffany! She'd attended her class and spent the better part of the afternoon completing the essay then having dinner with Noeul. But Saturday night belonged to Tiffany and she was excited. It'd been a while since she had a Saturday night date but thanks to Tiffany, the drought in her love life had come to an end.

Rainbows flying, stars shining, winds caressing. Life was good. So, so good.

~

The girl staring back at her had curled eyelashes, lengthened by mascara, defined by eyeliner. She also had a hint of a blush on her cheeks and a soft pink colouring her lips. She smiled at the girl and the girl smiled right back at her. She nodded, satisfied with what she saw.

Standing up, she checked out the rest of the girl. Leggings that resembled her second skin was topped by a pastel pink, green and beige-coloured long sleeve sweater. A pair of ankle-high boots would complete the look, she knew. She took one last look at her hair, admiring how soft it looked. Sunny's recommendation definitely worked wonders on her hair.

Alright. Aesthetically, she was ready. But was her heart ready for this?

~

She stood under a street lamp, waiting patiently. Her heart thumped hard within her ribcage and almost jumped right out of it when a husky voice greeted her.

"Hi, Taeyeon."

Her head shot up and her eyes met with Tiffany's. Every time it happened, Taeyeon felt as though she was about to lose her soul, so deep were Tiffany's eyes. Tiffany giggled, bringing her out of her trance and she blushed.

"Hi, Tiffany."

"You're so pretty."

Taeyeon smiled, elated yet awkward. "I should be the one saying that."

And she being honest too. Tiffany was stunning. She looked fabulous yet casual in her skin-tight jeans, grey tank and a funky red jacket-like thing. Taeyeon didn't know what it was but it looked gorgeous on her. Anything would look fantastic on her anyway. She was awesome like that.

"Aww, you're so sweet, Taeyeon. Thank you."

They smiled at each other and for a moment, that was all Taeyeon wanted to do. They could've done

nothing but smile all night and it would still have been the best Saturday night date ever, in her opinion.

“So...what do you wanna watch?” ask Tiffany as they began to walk towards the box office. They stopped before a large screen that was flashing the movie screening timings and looked.

“Romance?”

“Horror?”

Taeyeon turned to Tiffany just as she turned to her. They’d spoken at the exact same time.

“Horror, then.”

“Okay, romance.”

Once again, the exact same time. This was beginning to tickle Taeyeon and she giggled. Tiffany started giggling too and soon, they were a mess of giggles, unable to stop.

“Mmm, how about neither. Let’s watch something else.”

“Okay...how about this one?” Taeyeon pointed at the poster of an animated film. “I heard that it’s quite funny. Those yellow things are kinda cute too.”

“Minions, you mean.”

“Oh, that’s what they are?”

“Uh huh.”

“Okay. Let’s watch it then?”

“Okay. You get the popcorn, I’ll get the tickets.”

That sure sounded like a good plan.

~

They found their seats and settled down, making themselves comfortable. She’d been surprised to find out that Tiffany had gotten the pricier couple seats and tried to mask it. Or at least hope it wasn’t too obvious. Deep down inside, she was turning cartwheels yet at the back of her mind, there was a nagging worry:

How close could she get to Tiffany?

She didn’t want Tiffany to misunderstand her so she decided to play it safe. She would sit close, but not too close. Their arms would brush but that would be all. She would behave. But Tiffany had other ideas, it seemed. She shifted, cutting the distance between them down to zero and linked arms with her. Taeyeon’s eyes bulged at the feeling of Tiffany’s arm rubbing against her side and froze. Her grip on the tub of popcorn grew tighter and tighter as she tried not to embarrass herself.

Hold it in. Hold it in. It's okay. I'm okay.

Taeyeon shut her eyes for a moment to calm herself. Tiffany's pleasant scent was drifting into her nostrils and her mind was swamped by it. Oh man, all her senses were under attack! Help! Then, to make things worse, Tiffany shifted yet again, this time, resting her head on her shoulder.

Oh, holy shiiiiiiiiit.

Now, her left arm wasn't hers and neither was her left shoulder. Both of these body parts had abandoned her and gone to heaven. She couldn't. She just couldn't. Omegaaddd.

Eat the popcorn. Breathe.

She chewed and chomped on the popcorn and hoped that her heart would hold up through the movie. Tiffany reached into the tub and took some popcorn. Then, Taeyeon got the biggest surprise when Tiffany brought one to her lips. She blinked but was able to open her mouth and pluck it from Tiffany's fingers.

Oh, holy shiiiiiiiiit.

Taeyeon wasn't sure if she could make it through the movie without her heart stopping and giving up on her. Fortunately, the movie took her mind off things as she became engrossed in it. She laughed hard at the funny scenes, throwing her head back and letting it rip. The storyline was engaging and by the end of the movie, she'd become a fan of the minions. They were the cutest things ever.

Tiffany shifted a few times during the course of the movie but never once did she relinquish her arm. It was safe to say Taeyeon had lost all feeling in it by the end. A little iiiii but it was okay though. Totally okay by her. It was a good kind of iiiii.

~

Tiffany took her hand as they walked out to her car. Her pink car. Taeyeon still couldn't understand Tiffany's choice of colour but she respected it nonetheless.

"You really aren't a fan of pink, huh," said Tiffany, after they were seated in her car.

Taeyeon started. How did Tiffany know her thoughts?

"Oh, don't look so surprised. It shows quite plainly on your face, Taeyeon."

Taeyeon flashed a sheepish grin and shrugged. "Why do you like pink so much though?"

"Pink is my colour."

Taeyeon shook her head. It didn't make any sense to her. "Is everything you own pink?"

Tiffany grinned. "Pretty much."

“Too bad there aren’t any pink dogs,” laughed Taeyeon.

“Prince has a pink blanket, bed, a—”

“Wait. Prince is a girl?”

“No.”

Pink. Prince. Eww...

“Taeyeon.”

Uh oh... Tiffany sounded a little unhappy there. Taeyeon had to think of a way of this.

“Er...I’m sure Prince is a very handsome dog, right?” she said quickly, forcing an uneasy grin and hoping for the best.

Tiffany narrowed her eyes and gave Taeyeon a freezing glare before starting the engine. “Flattery gets you nowhere, Kim Taeyeon.”

“Prince must be really smart too. I wanna see him.”

“You could come over if you want.”

Yes! Crisis averted.

“I’d love to. When can I come?”

“How about right now?”

“Now?”

“My place is pretty close to yours. I can drive you back after.”

Taeyeon made a quick decision to agree. There were too many perks outweighing the cons. In fact, there weren’t any cons at all.

“Okay, let’s go now.”

“Great!” Tiffany chirped and broke into a wide smile that made Taeyeon’s heart skip.

~

Taeyeon was eager to see what Tiffany’s apartment was like. It turned out to be a pretty expensive looking place over looking the bustling street a few levels below. As expected, there was pink everywhere.

“Leave your shoes on the mat. Take a seat, make yourself comfortable,” said Tiffany as she headed towards her bedroom.

Taeyeon moved into the living room and sat down. The couch wasn't pink (thank heavens) but there were pink heart-shaped cushions on it. Books lined the shelf behind the couch and a small table for dining stood right outside the kitchen that opened out to it with a bar counter.

It was a small yet compact living space and Tiffany kept it neat and tidy. Things were where they were supposed to be, unlike her own apartment where she and Sunny only cleaned up when they felt like it. Seeing the order in Tiffany's apartment made her feel guilty for not cleaning up more. She resolved to clean up her apartment with Sunny. They would do it. Soon.

Prince was barking from behind Tiffany's bedroom door. Well, not really barking. More like yipping. A shrill yip. Incessant yips. Prince was clearly an excitable dog and wasn't on any account, a quiet one. Quite the opposite of her own dog, Ginger. She missed her dog after sending him to her family in her hometown. It was for the better though. Ginger would receive more care and attention back home. But she missed him. A lot.

A sudden nip at her feet had her jumping in her skin and she yelped in pain. A little white puppy was at her feet, biting away, yipping at her. She leapt to her feet and tried to move away from what she assumed was Prince.

"Prince!" Tiffany called, her voice stern and Prince whined but didn't stop chasing Taeyeon's feet. Neither did he stop yipping at Taeyeon. She couldn't stop moving. If her foot remained still for even a second longer, Prince would nip it. What was up with this dog!

Tiffany managed to pick Prince up after a while but he continued yipping at her from Tiffany's arms.

"I'm sorry, I don't know what's up with Prince tonight."

"He doesn't like me," Taeyeon said with a mournful pout.

"Aww, Taeyeon, don't be sad." Tiffany moved closer to pat Taeyeon's arm but Prince yipped so fiercely that he almost managed to produce an actual growl. "Okay, Prince. Back to the bedroom you go."

Taeyeon slumped onto the couch and hung her head while Tiffany returned to her bedroom with Prince.

Prince doesn't like me.

She was sad. She loved dogs and dogs usually loved her too. Why didn't Prince like her? And of all the dogs...it had to be Tiffany's dog.

Shit.

SHIT 20

Tiffany came back out to the living room and sat beside Taeyeon. “Taeyeon?”

“I’m going to make Prince like me.”

Tiffany stifled her giggle. “Okay. You do that.”

“It’s not funny! Prince is your dog. I want Prince to like me.”

“Isn’t it enough that I like you?”

Taeyeon blushed but shook her head. “I want your dog to like me too.”

“Aww, you’re the sweetest,” said Tiffany hugged her. “I’ll help you.”

“Okay!” Taeyeon’s grin was as silly as could be.

Meanwhile, Prince’s shrill yips continued to be heard through the bedroom door. It was a constant reminder that he didn’t like her and she didn’t want to stay here to talk.

“Tiffany, I think I’ll go back now.”

“What? You barely got here five minutes ago.”

“I want to figure a way to get Prince to like me.”

“Well, I can help you with it here.”

“It’s too noisy. Prince won’t stop yipping.”

“Yipping?” Tiffany raised a brow, amused.

“Yeah, Prince doesn’t bark. He yips. Like a toy dog or something.”

“Maybe that’s why he doesn’t like you.”

“Huh?”

“You don’t appear to like him very much either.”

“Well, the first thing he did was bite my foot. I don’t feel very friendly towards him at the moment.”

“Okay, I think it’s best to start from videos then.”

“Videos?”

Tiffany smiled, nodded and whipped out her phone. “Videos of my cute little Prince.”

~

An hour later, Tiffany dropped Taeyeon off at her place.

“I had a great time with you tonight,” she began, “and I’m actually really happy to see you trying so hard to get Prince to like you.”

Taeyeon winced. Her ankles hurt a little from Prince’s nips when she tried to pet him the second time but she wasn’t about to tell Tiffany that.

“I’ll keep trying.”

“You’re so sweet, Taeyeon,” Tiffany leaned in and planted a kiss right on her lips, “so awesome.”

HOOMMAAAAGGAAARRRDDDDDD!!!

Taeyeon’s eyes grew wider than they’d ever been and her heart threatened to stop beating. Tiffany had already drawn away but her breath was still bated. Help. She was about to suffer death by Tiffany. Help. Help. Heeelp.

“Taeyeon?” Tiffany was looking at her, half-curious, half-amused. “You okay?”

Taeyeon blinked, nodded, blushed and desperately wanted to jump for joy but managed, with some kind of superhuman effort, to keep herself from acting like an idiot.

“I’ll...I’ll...We’ll have lunch on Monday?” she asked, trying to maintain the normalcy between them.

Tiffany looked surprised by what she said. “I thought you’d never ask!” she exclaimed.

“So it’s a yes, then?”

Tiffany’s beautiful smile took over and she nodded. “Looking forward.”

Taeyeon beamed, her heart bursting with joy and said, “Goodnight, Tiffany.”

“Goodnight, Taeyeon.”

~

Taeyeon floated up the stairs, feeling on top of the world. Despite the setback with Prince, everything else had been wonderful tonight. The movie was good, Tiffany fed her popcorn, she fed Tiffany popcorn, they linked arms, held hands and to top it all off, Tiffany kissed her. On her lips! Whee!

She touched her lips as she stood in front of the door of her apartment. Tiffany’s lips were soft like cotton when they kissed. It was awesome. It’d been barely a couple of minutes since Tiffany drove off and she was already missing her and thinking about kissing her again. Oh boy, was she in trouble.

She found her keys and opened the door to find all her friends huddled on the couch. The lights were

off and a couple of them were covering their faces. Only Sunny looked relaxed and not at all afraid. Horror. They were watching a horror film.

“Hey, I’m back.”

Her friends had been so engrossed that they didn’t even notice her coming back but the moment she spoke, all hell broke loose.

“Taengoo!” Yuri jumped off the couch and ran to her, putting her hands on her shoulders before crouching behind her back. “Tell Sunny to stop the movie!”

“Huh?”

“She’s forcing us to watch it with her or she won’t let us stay to hear about your date with Tiffany!”

Taeyeon rolled her eyes and shrugged Yuri off her shoulders. “There’s nothing to listen to. You can go home now,” she said, walking to the couch and planting herself on the spot that Yuri vacated.

“Oh no. No way. We want to hear all about your date,” Sooyoung chimed in, sticking her face within an inch of Taeyeon’s.

“Sooyoung! What are you doing!” Taeyeon squeaked, trying to dodge Sooyoung’s intense stare.

“CSI! Looking for traces of lipstick...OH FOUND IT! THEY KISSED! THEY KISSED!”

“CSI does not stand for Choi Sooyoung Investigation. When will you give it up!” Taeyeon protested, “and quit staring at my lips!”

Horror movie forgotten, all eyes were on Taeyeon now and she was desperate to get to her room. They wouldn’t let her go, however, until they were satisfied with what she told them. This much she knew. Such were her friends.

So full of shit.

“Seohyun, I don’t think you want to hear about it. You’d better go back and study,” Yoona teased the youngest of them. “Besides, this story might corrupt your innocent mind.”

“Unnie! I want to listen too.”

“At your own risk then,” joked Sooyoung.

To Taeyeon’s right was Sunny. She looked at her, pleading for some help but all Sunny gave her was a shrug. Sunny had probably done her part. The horror film should have been a deterrent but friends like hers would brave all sorts of scary things to hear about her date.

“Alright, alright. I’ll tell. There’s nothing much anyway. You’ll probably be bored to death,” said Taeyeon, looking straight at Yuri who simply flashed a cheeky grin.

“You’re right. Your date might not be as wild as mine are but I’ve hit a rut lately so your story might

actually interest me.”

Taeyeon snorted and curled a corner of her lip, giving Yuri a look of disgust. But it didn’t affect Yuri one bit, merely eliciting a laugh from her.

“But I must say, Taengoo...you do look extra pretty tonight. Bet Tiffany liked it!”

“She did mention that she liked it.”

“Did you kiss? Did you? Did you?” Sooyoung hounded on.

Taeyeon blushed but nodded and her friends cheered.

“Oooh...so the kiss finally happened. Looks like someone’s really into our Taengoo!” laughed Yuri. “Irresistible charms, our Taengoo has.”

“Yeah, it was my pink lipstick. Too sexy for her to resist,” Taeyeon managed to joke.

“What kind of kiss was it?” asked Sooyoung.

“What are you, a kiss analyst now?”

“Mhm,” Sooyoung nodded, looking serious, “Kiss analysts are critical to CSI.”

Taeyeon rolled her eyes. “I’m not saying any more. A good girl doesn’t kiss and tell.”

“But unnieeeee,” Yoona butted in with her cutesy shrill voice and Taeyeon shuddered.

“Okay, okay. I’ll tell you everything. Just...don’t do it again.”

“Okay!” agreed Yoona, her mouth wide open and ready to laugh.

“It was a level one kiss.”

“That’s all?” Sooyoung looked disappointed. “Not even a hint of level two?”

“She was talking, I was looking at her, she leaned towards me and kissed me suddenly. The end.”

“Alright, it’s enough of grilling Taengoo. Time to stop,” Sunny said, giving Taeyeon a wide grin and a pat on her shoulder. “I’m going to sleep now.”

With Sunny leaving the couch, the rest of her friends decided that they had enough fun and started to get off the couch too.

“I’m glad we didn’t have to watch the entire movie,” said Seohyun as they were leaving, “or we would have completely missed the best cell regeneration sleeping time.”

“Seohyun!” the rest of her friends groaned.

~

Taeyeon tossed and turned for what seemed like forever. It bothered her. It really did. Prince. It was important to her that she should get along with Tiffany's dog. It wouldn't do to have Prince locked up in the bedroom each time she went over to Tiffany's. She wanted to play with Prince, pet him, stroke him, rub his fur and have fun with him and Tiffany. But none of that was going to be possible if she didn't make Prince like her. She had to get Prince to like her. But how?

Sunny.

Oh, why didn't she think of Sunny? Sunny was the perfect person to seek advice from. All animals loved Sunny to bits. She never had any problems with them. From puppies to chickens, snakes, cows and even donkeys, none of them could escape from her charms. She'd proven that much when they once stayed at a farm as part of a school program. Sunny would know.

A glance at her phone told her it wasn't the best time to wake Sunny up but she couldn't wait for morning. Morning was too far away. Now. She needed an answer to her problem right now.

"Sunny..." Taeyeon gave the sleeping girl a gentle shake. "Sunny..."

"Mmm...?" Sunny responded, half-asleep.

"I need to ask you a question."

Sunny groaned and rolled over, reluctant to leave her dream state. "Ask me tomorrow. Go back to sleep."

"I can't sleep."

"Alright, what's bothering you?"

Taeyeon looked at Sunny with sorry eyes, feeling apologetic yet relieved. "It's—"

"Tiffany?"

"Well, yes and no."

Sunny rubbed her eyes and looked at her waiting for her to elaborate.

"Tiffany has a dog called Prince."

"And...?"

Taeyeon pouted and said, "It doesn't like me."

Sunny blinked and for a second, looked as though she were about to laugh out loud. "Is that all?"

"Yes. But it's important to me. I want Prince to like me."

“How do you know Prince doesn’t like you?”

“It tried to attack me the moment it saw me. Bit my feet at every chance it got. And it isn’t the friendly, playful sort of nipping, not like how Ginger plays with me. And it keeps yipping at me.”

“Yipping?”

“It has this really sharp bark. It’s a little pup. Maltese.”

“So you want to know how you can make Prince like you?”

Taeyeon nodded, looking hopeful.

“I know a way.”

“What is it?”

“Kiss somebody right before you see Prince again.”

“What?”

“I’m not kidding.”

“No way.”

“Kissing releases oxytocins into your system and that helps to increase the bonding between human and animals. So increasing your oxytocin levels may help to make Prince trust you a little bit more. Of course, you can increase your oxytocin level in other ways, but kissing is probably the easiest for you.”

Taeyeon knew then that Sunny was serious about this. And Sunny was usually right. But...her advice... to kiss somebody...no way.

No. Shit.

SHIT 21

According to wikiHow, there were nine ways to win a dog's heart. Taeyeon hoped that some of those ways would work and she wouldn't have to kiss anybody. Really, why did Sunny suggest such an extreme method when there were so many other ways to do it?

Anyway...there were nine ways and Taeyeon frowned as she read through the list.

- 1.Observe the dog for a while to understand what it wants.
- 2.Pet the dog to forge a bond.
- 3.The fastest way to a dog's heart is through its stomach.
- 4.Teach the dog obedience routines.
- 5.Feed the dog and brush its fur every day.
- 6.Walk the dog.
- 7.Respect the dog's space.
- 8.Don't stare the dog right in the eye.
- 9.Praise the dog when it does things right.

Okay. There were nine but really, not all were viable. She didn't have to observe Prince to know that he didn't like her. And to pet him would be suicide for her ankles. The same went for all the others. Except for one. Point 3. That she could try.

~

She didn't realize how crowded pet shops could be on a Sunday until it was too late to turn back. With a sigh, she ploughed into the crowd and tried to grab the most popular puppy snacks. She'd almost gotten her hands on the last packet of chicken and fish heart-shaped biscuits when a slender hand picked it up before she did. No!

Desperate to buy it, she grabbed the slender arm and pleaded, "Er, Miss? Could you please let me have that?"

The lady turned around and stared.

"Please, please can I have it? I'm trying to get a puppy to like me and that's the most popular puppy snack in this shop. Please let me have it," she begged, trying to persuade the lady with puppy eyes of her own.

Much to her relief, the lady smiled. "I'll let you have it since you're so cute. Good luck with your puppy."

“Thank you!” Taeyeon was more than elated as she took the packet. “Thank you very much!”

The lady smiled one last time before turning away and Taeyeon stood still, gawking at the packet for some time. This was a good sign, surely.

No shit.

~

Oh boy, was she excited when Monday came. She had the puppy snacks packed in her bag the night before and she was all ready for class and lunch with Tiffany afterwards. But more than that, she was looking forward to winning Prince’s heart with the puppy snacks. Yes. She couldn’t wait.

Class was as usual. She arrived on time and settled down. It was just like any other lecture complete with the same girl sleeping at the back. Taeyeon had noticed her since the first class but the girl had always mysteriously disappeared before the end of the lecture. It made her wonder why the girl even bothered to turn up. But there were all sorts of people in this world:

Strange. Super strange. Super duper strange.

This sleeping girl would qualify as super duper strange.

Since the girl’s face was always turned towards the wall on the right, she couldn’t see what she looked like because she usually sat on the left side. Today would be different, she decided. She would go to the right and sneak a peek at the sleeping girl before her curiosity ate her up. She walked all the way to the end of the row and tried to look natural as she passed the girl by. Her eyes strained to the left and when they managed to lock on the girl’s face, she got the biggest surprise.

Never in a million years would she have guessed but there she was, her face cradled by her folded arms. Her eyes were not playing tricks on her. Yet, on hindsight, she should have been able to guess who it was. For who else would dare to sleep in plain sight? Who else would have the guts to do so? There was only one and no other.

Jessica Jung.

~

She wasn’t sure why, but she took the seat right next to Jessica and began taking her things out. It seemed a little rude to sit away from Jessica now that she knew. After all, she was dating Tiffany and Jessica was Tiffany’s best friend. They were related, in a way.

Her lecture pad and pen were in hand when she heard her soft voice.

“Why are you sitting here?”

Taeyeon turned to Jessica and saw that her eyes were open and staring.

“Because I realized it’s you.”

“Do I know you?”

“Er...well...you saw me once, at your house party.”

“It’s not my party. I’ve got nothing to do with it.”

“Okay. The party in your house then.”

“I’m sorry but I don’t remember who you are.”

“I was the one sleeping in one of your bedrooms. Tiffany was there.”

Jessica scrunched her face up, looking as though remembering took too much effort before giving up.

“I don’t remember.”

“It’s okay.”

“Are you Tiffany’s friend?”

“Yes, I’m sorry, I haven’t introduced myself. I’m Taeyeon.”

With that, Jessica sat up right, shocking Taeyeon with her quick movement. “You’re Taeyeon. The girl Tiffany is seeing.”

Taeyeon blushed. “Yes. It’s me,” she replied, feeling bashful. But Jessica shocked her yet again with an icy cold glare that turned her insides into slush.

“Don’t you dare break her heart.”

Taeyeon shook her head as though her life depended on it. “I won’t dare.”

“Good.” Jessica smiled and Taeyeon wondered how her face could change so much with just one smile. She watched as Jessica settled back down, placing her cheek on her folded arms and closing her eyes. Back to sleep, she presumed.

“Why are you always sleeping in class?” Taeyeon couldn’t resist asking even though she felt as though she were risking her life to do so.

Jessica’s eyes remained shut as she answered, “I’m not sleeping. I’m just resting my eyes.”

Taeyeon blinked. She was right the first time. Jessica was super duper strange alright.

Strange as shit.

~

“Bye,” whispered Jessica and it startled Taeyeon.

“Bye,” she managed to say as Jessica stood up and slipped out of the theatre, unseen by the prof. How, what and why were only some of the unanswerable questions she had in her mind. Perhaps she could ask Tiffany. Her heart leapt at the thought of seeing Tiffany soon. Hurray!

The lecture ended within minutes of Jessica’s departure and she packed up her things to go. She could wait no longer.

~

The burger place was more crowded than usual but Taeyeon managed to secure a table for two at the side. She looked around, impatient to see Tiffany again.

“Tiffany!” she called when she spotted her and she stood up so abruptly that her chair toppled over. It hit the floor with a loud clang and had her blushing in embarrassed as people turned to look. She bent to pick it up but Tiffany was faster.

“Thanks, Tiffany,” she said, her embarrassment dug in deeper, intensifying her blush.

Tiffany giggled and took her seat. “Life can never be boring with you around, that’s for sure.”

Taeyeon found herself smiling even though she detected the subtle teasing in Tiffany’s words. It was hard not to smile when Tiffany was around.

“So what are we having today?”

“Beef bulgogi burger with extra large fries,” chirped Taeyeon without hesitation. Extra large fries were a must.

“Alright, I’ll go get it.”

~

“So did you manage to buy the puppy snacks?” asked Tiffany as she chomped on her fries. “Mmm... yummy.”

Taeyeon grinned and took the puppy snacks out from her bag. “The fastest way to win a dog’s heart is through its stomach,” she quoted from wikiHow.

“I hope it works but what if it doesn’t? Do you have a backup plan?”

Taeyeon’s lips twitched. She didn’t want to tell Tiffany about Sunny’s advice. “I may have another way but let’s hope this one works.”

Tiffany smiled. “I hope so too.”

~

They chatted and ate, taking their time, enjoying each other’s company. So it was a while before they were done and heading to Tiffany’s apartment. Taeyeon was anxious. The puppy snacks had to work.

They just had to.

Pleaseeee...please let it be a success.

Taeyeon took a deep breath when they got to Tiffany's apartment. The packet of puppy snacks was in her hand and she gripped it like she would a life buoy. It was as good as a life buoy at this point. They were her lifeline. Her only hope.

Tiffany stepped in and indicated where Prince's food bowl was. Taeyeon put her bag on the couch before heading to the food bowl. She squatted beside it, puppy snacks in hand.

"You ready, Taeyeon?" Tiffany called from her room.

Taeyeon closed her eyes and muttered a quick prayer. Then, she replied, "Yes!"

"Okay!"

Tiffany reappeared with Prince in her arms. He was yipping already and Taeyeon put her faith in the little pile of snacks on her palm, ready to win his heart through his stomach. Tiffany placed Prince on the floor and he dashed across to Taeyeon who stretched out her palm. But Prince didn't buy it. He came to a halt a short distance from Taeyeon and bared his teeth. Then, yipping louder than ever, he went for Taeyeon's ankles again.

"Oww! Oww!" Taeyeon tried to dodge but squatting wasn't a position that allowed her to move fast enough and she could feel Prince's teeth beginning to sink into her skin. She dropped the snacks on the floor in her haste to get away and Tiffany hurried to her side as well.

"Prince!" Tiffany barked, her voice sharp and clipped. Prince stopped and looked at Tiffany for a moment. It was just a moment but that was the window Taeyeon was looking for and she ran for it. Straight into the bathroom she went, locking herself in to keep Prince away from her.

Panting a little, she put the lid down on the toiletbowl and sat on it. She then propped her right leg on her left thigh and examined her ankle. Thank goodness, it wasn't serious. Prince had barely scraped her skin when Tiffany stopped him. But it still hurt a little and Taeyeon pouted. So much for her plan. She sighed, feeling dejected as she stared at the little wound on her ankle. What was she going to do?

Kiss somebody.

Sunny's advice came to mind and her lips twitched. Kiss somebody. Well, there was only one person she could kiss right now. And this person was also the only one she wanted to kiss. Maybe...she could work up the courage to ask Tiffany to kiss her. Tiffany did say that she would help her in her quest, didn't she? Yeah, she did.

"Taeyeon, it's safe to come out now."

"Okay."

She stood up, straightened her back and reached for the door only to spot something hanging from the hook on it.

Ommaaagaaarrrdddd.

It was unmistakable. There was no room for doubt. It was fact, as true as the sun rising from the east and setting in the west.

Candy cane bra. She was staring at the legendary candy cane bra from that lingerie store.

Holy shit.

SHIT 22

How? What? Why? When? Questions flooded her mind and sent it spinning into chaos. Her hand stretched towards it of its own accord, and her fingers were less than an inch away from making contact with it when she stopped herself and dropped her hand. No. She was not going to touch Tiffany's bra. She was not a pervert. Stop. Stop. Stahp! No. She was going to open the door and act like she hadn't seen anything. Alright. She was ready. Three...two...one...

She smiled and stepped out of the bathroom.

“Are you alright?” Tiffany's molten brown eyes were roving up and down, anxious to make sure that she wasn't hurt.

“I'm alright.”

“I saw Prince going for your ankles. Did he bite you?”

Taeyeon tried to move her ankle away from Tiffany but the latter grabbed hold of her calf and gasped, “He bit you!”

“It's not a big deal. It's just a scratch.”

“Sit down on the toilet.”

Tiffany's tone made it clear that she meant business so Taeyeon obeyed without anymore protesting. She watched as Tiffany rolled up her sleeves and propped her leg up. She squeezed the wound and Taeyeon yelped.

“I'm sorry. This will hurt a little but I need to make it bleed.”

“It's okay.”

After a while, Tiffany took the showerhead down to rinse her wound with warm water before drying it up.

“You need to watch out for signs of infection, Taeyeon,” Tiffany said as she stood up.

“Tiffany, don't worry. I've had dogs since I was a kid. It'll be okay.”

“How can I not worry? Prince bit you!”

“It's more like a tiny scratch, Tiffany.”

“But still!”

A sudden rush of emotions had Taeyeon moving forward and throwing her arms around Tiffany. She drew the upset girl close to her body and locked her in tight. With her lips an inch from Tiffany's ear she murmured, “Don't worry. I'll watch out for the signs and see a doctor if anything crops up.”

“Okay,” Tiffany replied, her voice muffled by Taeyeon's hair.

Taeyeon patted her back and pulled away, grinning to ease Tiffany's worries but the latter was pouting.

“I'm sorry you have to try so hard to get Prince to like you. I don't know why Prince is acting like this.”

“It's okay. The snacks may not have worked but if there's a will, there will be a way.”

“Do you have another way?”

Taeyeon blushed at the thought of Sunny's advice. Did she dare to say it?

Tiffany began to grin a little and nudged her. “What is it?”

Well, here goes nothing.

“Sunny said that kissing somebody releases oxytocin and it helps to foster bonds between humans and animals,” Taeyeon answered, firing her words at top speed, hoping to lessen the embarrassment of having to bring up such a thing.

“What?” Tiffany exclaimed, looking as though she couldn't believe her ears.

Taeyeon didn't have the courage to say it again so she looked away, her hands and feet becoming awkward.

“Kissing somebody...helps?” Tiffany's tone was still one of disbelief.

Taeyeon nodded, unable to say a word more. A moment of silence ensued but it was broken by Tiffany's giggle and Taeyeon looked up, curious to know why.

“Oh, Taeyeon. You're the sweetest, cutest girl ever.”

“Huh?”

“So this is how you play, huh?” Tiffany's smile was knowing.

Taeyeon was confused. “Play? I'm not playing...?”

“Well, it's about time we stop playing and get down to business,” Tiffany replied, her voice sounding huskier with each word she spoke.

“Business?”

Taeyeon barely had time to blink before Tiffany's arms were around her neck, hands in her hair and lips pressed against hers, firm yet soft. Her eyes bulged from the initial shock but began to close as Tiffany got down to *real* business. With her eyes closed, her sense of touch and smell were enhanced, and this only amplified the sensations of Tiffany's lip caress.

Their lips locked and unlocked time after time, and Taeyeon could feel her soul drifting up heaven, blowing the trumpet along the way to express how fabulous things were, back down on Earth. Tiffany was good at kissing. Taeyeon realized this within the first few moments. She wasn't too aggressive, nor was she too laid-back. And feelings were stirring up within her as their lips met and met again.

Feelings, warming up, were growing, flowing through her veins from head to toe, giving her a pleasant buzz. Their noses rubbed against each other as their heads tilted this way and that. Their lips parted more and more, giving, taking, exchanging feelings. And at the first brief touch of their tongues, Taeyeon's spirits soared. It was the most electric sensation and it jazzed her up all over.

Taeyeon lost track of time but it felt too soon when they stopped.

“So,” Tiffany breathed, “do you have enough oxytocin now?”

Taeyeon was swimming in Tiffany's deep, brown eyes. Her breath was shallow and her heart was beating at an unprecedented rate. There was no doubt that she was flushed full of oxytocin now. Overflowing with oxytocin, in fact, if her feelings were any indication at all. But she couldn't have too much oxytocin, could she? The more the better, she thought. And now would be a good time to test out Sunny's theory.

“Let's try again.”

Tiffany grinned. “You're turning out to be quite insatiable.”

Taeyeon blinked in confusion. “Huh? I'm just going to try one more time with Prince.”

Tiffany looked a little taken aback. “You're actually serious about this oxytocin thing?”

“Yes...?”

“Oh my gosh, you're—” Tiffany burst into peals of laughter, loud and unbridled. “I can't with you, Taeyeon. I just can't.”

“Wait, you thought I wasn't serious? But that means—” Taeyeon's sentence came to a screeching halt as the sudden realization hit her. Tiffany had actually thought she was fishing for a kiss! And she obliged! This...was...what was this anyway.

“You know what? We should try this,” laughed Tiffany. She began walking to her room, laughing as she did and all Taeyeon could do was stand there and try to deal with the myriad of feelings that were colliding within her. Tiffany reappeared with Prince in her arms before Taeyeon could sort out any of her feelings and stood before her. Prince was surprisingly quiet.

“Go ahead, try petting him. I'm not going to let him go.”

Taeyeon stretched her hand at a snail's pace, apprehensive about the attempt but Prince merely sniffed at it. Tiffany looked as surprised as Taeyeon felt. Prince wasn't growling at her. Neither was he trying to attack her! Did that mean that Sunny's advice actually worked?

Holy shit.

~

Prince didn't exactly show affection for Taeyeon but she was pleased enough with the improvement. No tail wagging but no biting either. She could say that they were at least civil with each other and that was a great step forward, in her opinion. Tiffany thought so too and gave her another warm hug and soul-stealing kiss before she got off the car at her place.

All in all, things had gone pretty well and she couldn't wait to tell Sunny about her success.

“Sunny!”

“Eh?” Her petite roommate looked up from the game she was playing on her phone and stared.

“Sunny! Thank you! I love you!” Taeyeon cried, sweeping the stunned girl into her arms and hugging her tight.

“What? What's going on?”

“Your advice! It worked!”

“What advice?”

“Kissing! Oxytocin! It worked!”

Sunny's jaw dropped. “It worked?”

Taejeon nodded, delirious with happiness. “It worked! Prince stopped growling and attacking me!”

“Seriously?” Sunny squeaked in disbelief, her voice reaching an impossibly high pitch that would have made Taejeon cover her ears if it weren't for her high spirits.

“Why do you sound so shocked? It was your idea.”

That was when Sunny began to laugh. No, she didn't just laugh, she guffawed. The throw-back-head, mouth-wide-open kind of guffaw.

“Sunny...what's going on? Why are you laughing like that?”

“Oh my...” Sunny laughed so hard that tears were forming in her eyes. “I can't believe it actually worked.”

“What do you mean?”

“Taejeon...” Sunny could barely string a sentence without halting, “I was kidding about the kissing thing.”

“What!”

“And it worked! HAHAAH!” Sunny rolled over and clutched her stomach, her body shaking with laughter.

Taejeon couldn't believe her ears. Sunny...Sunny hadn't been serious about her advice. What must Tiffany be thinking! She groaned, just thinking about how ridiculous she must have looked when she told Tiffany about oxytocin. So that was why Tiffany didn't think she'd been serious at first. Oh gawd. She needed a hole...a hole to hide herself in.

Shit.

SHIT 23

The next couple of days went by, and Taeyeon closed each day out with a goodnight call with Tiffany. Each night, she went to sleep smiling and dreamt happy dreams of Tiffany and Prince. So it was a radiant Taeyeon who entered the theatre on Thursday, for her afternoon class with Yuri and Seohyun.

It was only when they headed to the seats to their right that Taeyeon recalled something she had wanted to tell Yuri.

“Yuri, how's things with Jessica?” she asked.

Yuri sighed and shook her head. “Not good. Not good at all. I haven't managed to even start a proper conversation with her. And I don't want to make it seem like I'm harrassing her or anything.”

“She's super duper strange.”

“She is. I'm starting to think she's only interested in sleeping.”

“I think so too.”

“Never met a girl like her,” Yuri pouted, “but I may have to give up.”

“Already?”

Yuri shrugged. “She's so nonchalant. You saw how she brushed me off and I'm sure Sunny already told you about her message.”

“What if I told you Jessica's in one of my classes?”

“2027. I know”

“Not not that one. My Monday class. She's in it.”

“Jessica?”

Taeyeon nodded.

Yuri gaped for a second before grabbing and shaking Taeyeon, “Why are you only telling me now?”

“I just found out this week!”

“Unnie!” Seohyun chided in a loud whisper, “we’re in class!”

Yuri heeded Seohyun's reprimand and stopped shaking Taeyeon. She gradually calmed down and entered a pensive mood, much to Taeyeon's relief.

“I’m gonna look like I’m desperate if I crash another lecture for her.”

“It’s a sacrifice you gotta make.”

“You know what? You’re right.” Yuri straightened her back and looked as though hope had been restored in her. “Who cares if I look desperate right? It’s okay. I can be desperate for a sleeping beauty.”

“Yeah, it’s okay. The worst thing that can happen is your rep going down the drain. No issue.”

Yuri jabbed her with a violent elbow. “You gotta cover me.”

“Oww...” Taeyeon groaned and rubbed her arm. “Okay, I’ll cover you. No problem.”

“Great!” Yuri cheered up and her grin was back in an instant. “I can’t wait for Monday.”

“Shh!” went Seohyun with a frown. “It’s starting.”

And that was the end of it. Seohyun had spoken.

~

Later that day, Taeyeon lay in bed, all tucked in and ready to sleep. But she had to do one little something first. She didn't have to wait long. Her call was picked up before the first ring was even over and Tiffany's husky voice came through right away.

“How was your day, honey?”

Taeyeon blushed at the term of endearment. Fortunately, it went unseen by Tiffany.

“Class was kinda boring today,” she managed to say, “Only Seohyun paid attention.”

“Tsk. That’s not good.”

“Don’t worry, we borrowed Seohyun's notes.”

“Well, in that case...okay.” Tiffany giggled and Taeyeon simply grinned, enjoying the sound of it.
“You're setting such a bad example for Seohyun though.”

“Tiffany, you really must meet Seohyun. You won't say that again once you've met her.”

“Hmm, I want to meet your friends too. Sunny and Yuri seem fun to hang out with.”

“They are. I love Sunny. She's the best roommate anyone can have. And Yuri is just a lot of fun. She has so much energy.”

“Why don't we all hang out or something?”

“Sure. They're probably gonna do a movie night this Saturday. We can join them after dinner instead of going for a movie, if you want.”

“Movie night? Mmm...sounds good actually. Can I bring my friends too?”

A light bulb went off in Taeyeon's head right then. “Are you talking about Jessica?”

Tiffany giggled. “I'll bet somebody's gonna be real thrilled if I bring Jessica, huh.”

“I think she will,” Taeyeon snickered.

“Okay. I'll try to drag Jess along with me. She usually refuses to leave her bed.”

“Why does she love her bed so much?”

“Don't ask me,” Tiffany laughed. “I don't think I'll ever know.”

“This sounds like fun though. My friends and your friends and us.”

Taeyeon could hear the smile in Tiffany's voice as the latter replied, “I'm sure it'll be great.”

“I'll tell Sunny. This probably means no horror movies, right?”

“No. No horror please. Jess will shred our eardrums if it's horror.”

“Okay. I'll ask Sunny to pick something else.”

“I'm so excited!”

Taeyeon grinned. "Me too."

"Okay, it's late. We'd better go to sleep now."

"Yes. Sleep."

"Goodnight honey, see ya tomorrow."

Taeyeon blushed again as she said, "Goodnight Tiffany."

~

Friday's 2027 was officially Taeyeon's favourite class for obvious reasons.
Tiffany. Tiffany. Tiffany. Yeah. Reason enough.

She smiled at her girlfriend as she took her seat. Yes. Girlfriend. Girlfriend! Rainbows and butterflies were all the rage as she wrapped herself in the warm joy of having a girlfriend. And it wasn't just any girl. It was Tiffany. Tiffany Hwang. Tiffany Hwang...what? Taeyeon stopped short of her mental jubilation when she realized she didn't actually know Tiffany's full name. She felt like an epic failure, not knowing Tiffany's full name. Wasn't that her duty, as a girlfriend? Of course it was! She had better find out!

"Hi Taengoo," a tentative voice greeted her.

Taeyeon knew who it was at once. She'd have to be careful. She didn't want to hurt Noeul's feelings. And since she wasn't quite sure where Noeul stood on this relationship she was in with Tiffany, it was better to err on the side of caution.

"Hi Noeul," she replied with a warm smile.

"How are you?"

The question struck her as odd. Noeul was acting as though they were merely acquaintances, strangers even. Was this her way of handling the situation?

"I'm okay."

"Okay?" Noeul raised an eyebrow, questioning her with a sharp stare. "That's all?"

Taeyeon squirmed. She hadn't expected things to be smooth between them but this was way more uncomfortable than she'd thought.

"I'm happy."

Noeul smiled. "That's good. I'm glad to hear an honest answer. You don't have to be so wary around me, you know."

"I don't want to hurt your feelings. You're my good friend, Noeul. I'm trying not to be insensitive."

"And I appreciate it, Taengoo, but I'd much rather a natural conversation."

That made a lot of sense. Perhaps she was over thinking things.

"Okay."

"So let's start again," Noeul said with a smile, "how are you?"

"I'm pretty good."

Noeul chuckled and shook her head. "You really do tone things down a lot, don't you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, you're obviously over the moon. I saw the way you smiled at her, you know."

Taeyeon blushed. Was it that obvious?

"I'm your friend. I know you well enough to read into your smiles, Taeyeon. And I'm happy for you too. I really am. I mean, I wish I were the one you are smiling at like that but I know it's not happening. I'll get over it. At least I had a go at it."

"You're such a wonderful person, Noeul. And the best friend ever."

Noeul smiled and she smiled back. Yes. Noeul was right. She was over the moon. Way over the moon.

~

A pair of slender arms snaked around her shoulders and locked themselves around her neck as she sat on a bench, waiting, after the lecture. She knew instinctively who it was even though people were milling around the building where Tiffany worked as a TA.

"Taeyeon...a dollar for your thoughts..." a husky voice sent a sensuous streak zipping down her spine

and confirmed her guess.

Taeyeon stretched her palm out backwards immediately. "Show me the cash and I'll show you my thoughts."

A semi-harsh smack landed on her palm and she chuckled.

"That's five dollars. Keep the change."

"Does that mean I have to show you five thoughts?"

Tiffany huffed. "I want to know what you were thinking. You looked so focused while sitting here."

"I was thinking about how lucky I am to have met you."

Lips brushed her cheek, and a husky voice followed, "Me too."

Taeyeon blushed. "I was also thinking about your name."

"My name?"

"I don't actually know your full name."

"You don't?"

Taeyeon shook her head. "I never asked, you never told."

Tiffany's soft laughter fluttered around like butterflies and Taeyeon couldn't help but smile. Such was a Tiffany's influence over her.

"I don't usually volunteer that information to people. I guess it's become a habit to leave it out."

"But I want to know."

"There'll be a price to pay."

Taeyeon pouted. "Don't I get to know for free? I should get some girlfriend privileges."

"Girlfriend privileges don't include this type of information."

"What kind of privileges do I get then?"

"Why don't you come home with me and find out?"

Taeyeon's blood rushed down south and all over the place, leaving her mind in a haphazard state. Tiffany and her loaded quips were the stuff of any girl's wildest dreams, surely.

"Okay. I'll go home with you and find out," Taeyeon replied, maintaining her outward calm and Tiffany giggled.

"Let's go then. Right now."

~

Taeyeon was a little anxious. Prince had been alright with her the last time but that was after Tiffany kissed her big time. What if...no. Taeyeon shook her head. No. Everything will be fine. Prince will like her. Yes.

With renewed confidence, she stepped into Tiffany's apartment and divested herself of her shoes.

"Take off your socks as well," said Tiffany as she headed for her bedroom. "Or you're gonna look funny with them on."

Taeyeon didn't understand why she'd look funny with socks on but complied anyway. She dropped her socks beside her sneakers and headed for the couch. Tiffany came back out with Prince in her arms and much to Taeyeon's relief, Prince didn't growl at her. He wasn't exactly on friendly terms with her; he seemed wary of her but it was an improvement and that was good, she supposed.

"Prince will take to you eventually."

"I sure hope so."

Tiffany set Prince on the couch between them and leaned forward to kiss her. "You're so lovable. Don't worry, Prince will fall in love with you. I'm sure."

Taeyeon blushed. The kiss was sweet. Could she get more? Taking Tiffany's hand in hers, she winked and smiled. "We should kiss again," she said, sounding bolder than she felt.

Tiffany blinked. "Did you just say we should kiss?" she asked, clearly surprised by Taeyeon's uncharacteristic request.

There was nothing left to do but to play on. "Yes. Kissing seems to make Prince like me more."

"Oh..." went Tiffany, her eyes beginning to gleam with a spark of cheekiness, "so this kissing thing is strictly business, huh?"

Taeyeon kept a straight face and gave Tiffany a curt nod. "Strictly business." *And I'm the biggest liar on Earth right now.*

Tiffany blinked again, her eyes reflecting her state of confusion. "Are you serious about this?"

"Completely."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Really?!"

Taeyeon finally grinned. "Nope, not really."

Tiffany squealed with laughter and smacked Taeyeon's arm. "You nearly got me there."

"So, another kiss?"

"Enough of the talking already."

Encouraged by Tiffany's responses, Taeyeon grinned her widest and took no prisoners. Her lips parted as they closed in on Tiffany's and locked onto their target in less than a second. Tiffany reciprocated immediately and it was all Taeyeon could do to stay on top of things. Her fingers found Tiffany's nape and curled to keep a firm yet gentle hold on it. With her eyes closed, she tasted and almost drowned in the sea of sensation. It was an exquisite taste. Tiffany's unique taste. Strawberries, Taeyeon could taste strawberries.

"Tiffany, you taste so good," she gasped when they finally parted after running out of breath.

"That's..." Tiffany giggled, "that's the nicest thing to say to a girl after kissing her," she teased.

Taeyeon blushed and tried to explain herself, "I mean...you taste like strawberries. Really sweet."

Tiffany giggled again. "That would be the breath mints I popped before meeting you."

"Oh." Taeyeon couldn't say more. Her brain was busy trying to cope with the implied message that said

Tiffany had been thinking about kissing her prior to meeting her. And even prepared for it. "Oh."

"I ate something really funky while working so I didn't wanna...you know...ruin things...if we kissed."

"It wouldn't have been ruined. I don't mind funky because it's you."

Tiffany's lips curled into the most beautiful smile right then. "Taeyeon...you're the sweetest girl I've ever met. I'm a lucky girl."

Taeyeon shook her head in disagreement. "*I'm* the lucky one. I mean, I messed up so bad but you still want me. I still can't believe my luck sometimes."

"It's not luck. Taeyeon, you're attractive. And what's best is the fact that you don't flaunt it. You don't try too hard. You're you, and that's what I love about you."

"I introduced myself to you with a clogged toilet, a horrible stench and all the worst things I can think of. How is any of that attractive?"

"Maybe that's a bit of luck since I'm a plumber's daughter. I've learnt to look beyond the shit to see what's inside. And what do I see in you? I see a kind soul, a good heart."

"You can tell from all that shit?" Taeyeon had no idea where all these praises were coming from. She hadn't exactly been the best example of any of that, had she?

Tiffany was tickled pink by her blunt question and it took a while before she could come back with a reply.

"Taeyeon, do you seriously not see what I see in you? Do you need to be furnished with a few examples?"

Taeyeon shrugged. "Like?"

"I can list so many." Tiffany paused for a moment and stared deep into her eyes before continuing. "You didn't get angry when I wrongly accused you of lying about your number. Instead, you waited for me and explained. You didn't blow up at your friends when they left you behind at the party. Rejecting Noeul was difficult for you but you did it anyway, for her. And you give so much of yourself for me. Take Prince for example. He bit your ankles but you didn't give up trying to win his heart. All because he is my dog."

Tiffany paused again and smiled, but this time, her eyes turned dark and swirled with something else. "Taeyeon, I could go on all day about how kind and wonderful you are but that's really not what I want

to do tonight."

Taeyeon's breathing hitched and her heart pounded. *That's not what she wants to do tonight? So what does she want to do tonight? What? Could it be...?*

Her lips twitched. A vivid image of the candy cane bra had come to mind suddenly and she wondered if Tiffany was wearing it right now.

Kim Taeyeon! What are you thinking of?! You're such a hopeless pervert!

A disturbance of her leg burst the bubble of her inner thoughts and had her looking down.

"Prince..." Taeyeon uttered, feeling the puppy's teeth on her jeans and Tiffany put him on the floor immediately.

"Bad boy!" she chided and smacked his butt. Prince whined and stared at Tiffany with puppy eyes (literally) for a moment before running away, presumably to play with something else. Tiffany then turned back to Taeyeon and grinned, looking sheepish. "Sorry about that. I really don't know what's up with Prince. He's not usually like this."

"Maybe he's jealous," quipped Taeyeon, a cheeky grin making an appearance on her youthful features.

"Maybe..." Tiffany replied with a knowing smile of her own. "Should we make him more jealous?"

"I think we should. And I know the perfect thing to do," Taeyeon added, the beginnings of a naughty idea forming and taking hold of her mind in a half-crazed manner. "I think Prince will get real jealous if you show me your bra."

Okay. It's official. I've gone nuts. Totally nuts.

She braced herself for Tiffany's rebuke but it never came.

"Is that all you want me to show you?"

Tiffany's husky seduction had her swallowing hard to maintain her composure but she managed to make a comeback by some miracle. "Baby steps, baby. One step at a time."

Smooth Taeyeon. That was reeeal smooth. I'm so proud of you.

"Okay."

Okay? Okay?? Okay???

Taeyeon couldn't breathe. She couldn't blink. She couldn't move a single inch of her body. Oh wait. Her eyes. Her eyes could move. They could move and follow the buttons as they were undone on Tiffany's blouse and follow the widening gap between the opening. They could widen at the first glimpse of a dash of red and white. No way. No holy way. Nooooo way.

Her eyes bulged as Tiffany's blouse was undone and cast aside. Oh. Oh. Oh. It was red and white. Stripes. Candy cane bra. On Tiffany. In the flesh. Right in front of her. On the couch.

HO. LY. SHiT.

SHIT 24

"Taeyeon? Taeyeon?"

Taeyeon could barely nod in response. She heard Tiffany's light chuckle and blinked. *What?*

"You were pretty bold a while ago. Where did bold Taeyeon go?" Tiffany chuckled.

"Flushed down the toilet."

Tiffany's chuckle grew into a full-bodied laugh and Taeyeon could only sit and stare. Could anyone blame her though? Did Tiffany have any idea just how sexy she looked sitting there in her candy cane bra? And it wasn't just any bra. It was the candy cane bra! Candy cane! Had Tiffany forgotten the very words she had whispered while they were in that lingerie store? Had Tiffany forgotten the very bra she'd been holding in her hands at that time?

"Do you recognize this bra?" Tiffany's husky voice flowed down her throat like thick honey, coating everything in sweetness.

"Yes, of course." *Are you kidding? I held this very bra in my freaking hands!*

Tiffany's eyes sparkled just then, with sensual delight. "Then you'll remember what I said to you back then."

Taeyeon nodded, wondering what Tiffany was getting at.

"Well, we're there now."

"We're there?"

"Aren't we?"

Taeyeon's breath hitched as she realized where they were heading towards. "I don't...know."

Tiffany's eyes grew smoky as she sidled up to Taeyeon and wrapped her arms around her neck. "I've been waiting for this," her eyes flashed dangerously, "I thought I was gonna have to take you by force if you didn't make a move soon."

Taeyeon leaned away and tried to keep calm. "Aren't we...going...a little too...fast?"

Tiffany shook her head. "You think this is fast?"

"Yes?"

"I don't."

"You don't?"

"I'm kinda impatient. I don't wanna wait any longer."

"But—"

Taeyeon didn't get a chance to protest. Tiffany was on her, lips parting, seeking, finding and locking. She could feel Tiffany's weight on her, the taller girl leaning to close the gap between them, pressing her body against hers. She tilted backwards under the weight and toppled over onto her back where she lay beneath Tiffany. Their kiss broke for a moment only to be continued as soon as Tiffany realigned herself, and lay snug between Taeyeon's legs. Then, it was an all-out assault on her senses.

Shivers zipped down her spine as Tiffany latched onto her jaw and planted kisses down the line. Taeyeon's eyes were squeezed shut as Tiffany's tongue flicked at random times, catching her skin unawares, shocking her in the best possible way. Tiffany trailed up and down her jawline before dragging her tongue all the way up to her earlobe and flicking it.

"Oh," she moaned, unable to stop herself from emitting the sound of pleasure, "F-Fwang..."

"It's Hwang. Hwwwang," Tiffany corrected her, pulling away and leaving Taeyeon feeling hot and cold. With furrowed brows and lips pressed into a chastising line, Tiffany didn't come across as happy and Taeyeon realized then, just how anal Tiffany was about her name.

"Hwang. I'm sorry."

Then, Tiffany was back on her lips, taking everything Taeyeon had to offer and more. Taeyeon's soul could have been sucked right out of her and it wouldn't have mattered, as far as she was concerned, for Tiffany was the sucker and she was the suckee. With lips that soft and a tongue that wicked, Taeyeon was lost to Tiffany, lost *in* Tiffany and had no desire to extract herself from this heat-inducing embrace, ever.

Tiffany...Tiffany...F...F...Fany...

"Uhhh..." Taeyeon moaned when her lips were freed. Tiffany had moved on to her neck and was currently sucking on a particularly sensitive spot that was shooting piercing bolts of ignition straight to

her loins. Her loins. F...F...Flaming loins. Her loins were flaming. But before they could combust, Tiffany stopped, her breath heavy, an indication of how affected she was by their connection.

"Taeyeon..."

"F...Fany..."

Tiffany tugged at her hoodie, sliding her palm up under it. "Get this off."

Taeyeon's muscles tensed where Tiffany touched her and her hairs stood in the wake of her gliding palm. Oh dear holy macaroons, was she in heaven? How much more of this could her heart take before it called it a day?

"So you really do love blue."

"Huh?"

With a corner of her lips quirked, Tiffany clarified, "Your bra, Taeyeon. It's navy blue."

"I like blue."

"Will you ever like pink?"

"Must I?" asked Taeyeon with a grimace, inducing a snort and a chuckle from Tiffany. Naughty fingers played along the edge of her 'sailor bra' as she called it and skimmed the exposed cleavage, teasing, enticing, alluring.

"Might I persuade you to be civil with it at least?"

Taeyeon bit her lip as Tiffany's lips brushed the trail her fingers had travelled. Her toes curled, uncurled, curled, uncurled and curled again with each delightful pleasure that Tiffany supplied with gentle caresses. She was so enraptured by Tiffany's magic that she'd have agreed to almost anything Tiffany asked. Except for this. Pink. No. Never.

But Tiffany pressed a fervent kiss into Taeyeon's open mouth and her answer never made it out. All thoughts left the building and her instincts kicked in, inciting her hands to wander across the smooth expanse of fair skin. The wonders of Mother Nature were definitely instilled in Tiffany. Oh yeah.

The sudden feeling of her shy twins meeting cool air surprised her and she jumped. Looked down. Where had her bra gone? Looked up. What was that glint in Tiffany's beautiful eyes? Why was her head dipping?

Oh.

Oh.

Oooh.

~

[Outtake #24 Rated R](#)

“Uh.”

Tiffany smiled to herself. Taeyeon was the most adorable creature she'd ever laid her eyes on and now, she had her topless and available. Oh, the things she planned to do to Taeyeon would send the nuns running for the hills. Her hands claimed the length of Taeyeon's arched back and pulled the moaning girl closer to her deprived soul. Deprived indeed. When was the last time she had a girl as pretty as Taeyeon topless in her arms. Too long ago, in her opinion.

She hadn't been kidding about forcing herself on Taeyeon if this moment hadn't arrived. It had been five weeks since they first met and by her standards, this was as slow as a snail's pace. Then again, her previous relationship hadn't ended well, what with her partner cheating on her and all. Perhaps taking it slow would make it last a little longer. Would it?

She was face-to-breast at the moment and Taeyeon's reaction to her touch was highly satisfactory, if not awesome. She flicked her tongue and watched as Taeyeon puckered up and hardened for her. She loved looking at them upclose. It was so interesting to watch. To see the body reacting just an inch from her eyes. She flicked the other and watched as it did the same as its twin. Beautiful. This was Mother Nature's masterpiece—the human body. The female chest was full of attractions, drawing her to it as though she were under a spell.

“Fany...”

“Taeyeon...” she breathed. Everything was so sexy to her. Everything Taeyeon did. Every word Taeyeon said. Every move Taeyeon made. The way she walked. Sauntered. Strolled. Taeyeon was insanely attractive and strangely unaware of it. But that was probably part of the charm anyway. She ran her fingers up the sides and smiled when Taeyeon squirmed.

“Ticklish?”

“A little.”

“Mmm...” she hummed and cupped her mouth over Taeyeon's left bosom. She latched on it and sucked, running her tongue over the raised tip to elicit the sharp gasp and jerk from Taeyeon.

“Fany...”

The little moans and cute little squeaks from Taeyeon's throat drove her desire even higher and she pressed Taeyeon against the couch to keep her still. Taeyeon's fingers were in her hair, rubbing,

stroking, and encouraging, despite the initial shy stance that Taeyeon took on. She flicked her tongue at high speed and fought against Taeyeon's thrashing body. She groped about before finding the other tip and rolled it between her fingers, applying pressure at random moments and soon, Taeyeon was but a mumbling mess.

She lavished extravagant attention on both Taeyeon's left and right before relinquishing them and leaning back. Only then did Taeyeon open her eyes gradually, her body twitching as she sat up straight. "Wow."

"I'll take that as a compliment," said Tiffany with a grin.

"You made me feel things I've never felt before."

Tiffany spread her arms wide open and draped one over the back of the couch. "Can you make me feel the same?" she asked as she reached behind her back for the clasp and undid it with a quick pinch of her fingers.

"I..." Taeyeon trailed off, unable to express herself in view of the spectacular view that she'd just been blessed with. "Holy shit," she muttered as Tiffany dropped her candy cane bra and bared her chest. Tiffany wrapped her hands around Taeyeon's neck and pulled her to her modest twins. They weren't going to win any awards for voluptuousness but they were perky and definitely craving for attention. "Oh my gosh," she muttered when Taeyeon pressed her warm mouth over her, mound and tip at once. Strong currents of electric shocks sparked everywhere and her skin was ablaze with fire. Taeyeon was definitely experienced in this area. The girl's teeth scraped her tip and light nibbles sent her into a series of loud moans, long and drawn out as intense heat exploded all the way down south. She had changed her mind about Taeyeon by the second minute of her administrations. Taeyeon was not only experienced. She was goddamn talented.

No shit.

~

The awkwardness she initially felt after they first got together had faded into obscurity and it was as though the clouds had cleared and the sun was shining through. Taeyeon was reborn. And she saw Tiffany in a completely different light now. Tiffany...just the thought of what she had done with Tiffany had her biting her lip to keep from grinning like an idiot.

"Time passes too quickly when you're having a good time," Tiffany whined, wearing a miserable pout.

"I'm sorry I can't stay."

Tiffany shook her head. "No, don't be. It's a good thing...taking it a little slower. I know I can be impatient about things so it's good to have you slow me down a little."

Taeyeon was relieved to hear that. She'd been worried Tiffany might not be happy about her refusal to

stay the night. She didn't want to go too far too quickly and thankfully, Tiffany was understanding enough. So she smiled, patted Tiffany's knee and got up, adjusting her clothes as she did. "You know what? I think we should do dinner with our friends instead of having it by ourselves tomorrow. It'll be nice."

"I'd like that too."

Nothing could've stopped Taeyeon's lips from curling up. "Great! I'm really looking forward to tomorrow now." But the grin turned upside down when she stooped to pick her socks up. There was a strange smell wafting from it and had her scrunching her nose. "Eww!"

"What?" Tiffany stuck her head over Taeyeon's shoulder to look at her socks. Taeyeon took a whiff at them and stuck her tongue out in disgust. "It's pee."

"Prince!" Tiffany barked at once but Prince didn't come running. Understandably so. Taeyeon wouldn't have appeared either, if Tiffany was calling her in that tone. "Prince!"

Taeyeon tugged Tiffany's hand with her free one and shook her head. "Don't. It's alright, really. I'll just wash it when I get back home."

"No. I'll clean them for you. It's Prince's fault. I can't believe he peed on your socks!"

"And here I thought he's beginning to like me..."

"Aww, don't be sad. Prince is just being really naughty."

"It's okay. I'll keep working on it. Prince will love me one day."

Tiffany grinned and planted a kiss on her cheek. "Yes, he will."

~

It was Saturday morning and Taeyeon had never woken up happier. Her dreams were full of Tiffany and her lips. Those sexy red lips that could evoke the strongest sensations from within. Those lips were to die for. The memory of Tiffany's lips roaming about her body was more than she could handle, however, so she hopped into the shower to cool down.

But it didn't help. Water cascading down her body cooled her temperature but reminded her of how light Tiffany's touch had been, yet how deep it could reach into her soul. And that had only been them exploring their toplessness. They hadn't even ventured further south yet. Taeyeon didn't know how she was going to handle things when they eventually got to full nudity. That was too much hotness for her

to withstand for now.

She flashed hot and cold at the thought of Tiffany joining their movie night. Suddenly, she wasn't sure if it was a good idea. For one, she had no control over what her friends might do or say. Secondly, she had no control over what Tiffany might do or say. It sounded like a recipe for disaster. Oh no.

Shit had better not hit the ceiling tonight.

~

The door bell rang and Taeyeon looked down at Yuri for assurance that she wasn't going to be the only nervous wreck tonight. Here was a girl who was about to receive the shock of her life. Yuri had no idea about Jessica's impending arrival and was slouched on the couch, legs flung over the armrest, head propped on her thighs.

Sunny hurried out from the kitchen where Yoona was fooling around with Seohyun, another two completely unsuspecting girls. She and Sunny had decided to keep it a secret and Taeyeon thought it was a fantastic idea now that the moment had arrived. It was definitely going to be a lot of fun seeing how Yuri coped with Jessica's presence. On top of that, it would take the heat off from her and Tiffany.

“Hi, Tiffany!”

“You must be Sunny?”

“The one and only!”

Taeyeon rolled her eyes. Sunny was definitely too hyped up about tonight and it was showing in her cheesy lines.

“This is Jessica. Jessica, this is Sunny, Taeyeon's roommate.”

A soft, gentle voice floated in to where she was on the couch. “Hi, Sunny. Thanks for having us over.”

“You're totally welcome, Jessica. Come in!”

Taeyeon tried to contain her laughter at the thought of Yuri and her body shook with the effort, inciting the very girl to look up at her curiously. She grinned, shaking her head at Yuri who was listening to music through earplugs and ignorant of what was going on at the door.

She leapt to her feet and deserted Yuri when Tiffany appeared. Her hands were awkward, not knowing if they should hug in the presence of all their friends but Tiffany appeared to have no such reservation

and threw her arms around her with a great big smile.

“I missed you today.”

Taeyeon blushed. “Me too.”

Tiffany gave her a beautiful smile before turning to Jessica. “You two have met so don't be shy.”

“Hi, Je—” a body crashed onto hers, nearly knocking her over and she grabbed Tiffany's arm to regain her balance. “What—” she started to say when she realized who it was. It was Kwon Yuri. Her cool, attractive friend. Her immensely popular friend. Her highly sought after friend. Yes, it was this very Kwon Yuri who had stumbled and knocked into her, somehow, and was now gripping her arm so hard that it was beginning to hurt.

“Hi!”

Taeyeon winced. Yuri's voice was unnaturally high. And whenever it went that high, it was the most awkward sound on earth. Like some kind of over zealous frog that was trying way too hard to be cute.

“Yuri, this is Jessica and Tiffany. They're here to join us for dinner and the movie.”

“Oh!” Taeyeon winced again at Yuri squeaking, “You didn't mention any of this, Taeyeon!” The latter shot her a look that said you-owe-me-an-explanation but Taeyeon was saved by the belle when Jessica cleared her throat just then.

“Excuse me, I need to use the bathroom. Where is i—”

“I'll show you to it!” squeaked Yuri even before Taeyeon could open her mouth and her jaw dropped as Yuri put her arm around Jessica and led her away. An elbow to her side had her turning to look at Tiffany with questions in her eyes.

“Yuri is pretty smooth.” Tiffany giggled and Taeyeon had no idea if she was being serious or not. “But she really has to do something about her voice.”

Taeyeon grinned. “Yuri's voice goes up freaky high when she's excited.”

“Well, then I'm glad your voice doesn't do that when you're excited.”

“Yours goes up pretty high too.”

“Really?”

“Mhm.”

“I hope I don't sound as squeaky.”

Taeyeon shook her head. “You're totally adorable. Not squeaky at all.”

Tiffany broke into a grin, her eyes turning into cute little crescent moons and she smacked Taeyeon's arm lightly. “You're just biased. I should seek a second opinion.”

“But only my opinion should matter,” said Taeyeon with a pout, earning herself a quick peck on the cheek from Tiffany.

“Cheeky girl.”

Taeyeon only grinned wider as Tiffany ruffled her hair playfully. Then, in what is perhaps a ninja move, she leaned in, taking the opportunity to steal a quick kiss from Tiffany. Tiffany's eyes widened an inch before turning back into crescent moons again and Taeyeon was about to steal yet another kiss when Sunny's voice cut through her intention and rang in her ears.

“Dinner's ready! Taeyeon! Is the table set up yet?”

“I'll set it now,” answer Taeyeon and she stole another quick kiss from Tiffany before flashing a wide grin and pulling away to set the table for dinner. This was going to be one interesting dinner. Not to mention the movie to follow after.

No shit.

SHIT 25

With Tiffany's help, the table was set in no time and the dishes were served. Yoona was an exceptionally good cook and Taeyeon was glad she had chosen to have dinner with her friends instead of eating out with Tiffany. No doubt, time alone with Tiffany was awesome but Yoona's cooking was to die for. Yeah.

Seohyun often helped Yoona out in the kitchen and together with Sunny, a delicious, mouth-watering dinner was pretty much a guarantee. And so it was.

“Yoona, this curry rice is totally delish!” exclaimed Tiffany, after swallowing a mouthful of the rice.

Yoona's eyes twinkled, and her wide smile promised to give weak hearts a hard time. “Thanks! Eat more.”

“I most certainly will.”

Taeyeon grinned and stood up to scoop more of it onto Tiffany's plate.

“Thanks, honey,” chirped Tiffany and Taeyeon blushed to the roots of her hair as her friends straightened their backs and looked to them with eyes that looked mighty dangerous to her.

“Sweetie, do you mind passing the salt?” Sunny asked Sooyoung, sporting a devilish grin and Sooyoung was quick to return with a saccharine, “Sure, sugarbuns.”

Taeyeon burned, almost to a crisp, as embarrassment blazed a white-hot trail from her cheeks to her toes while the rest of her friends sniggered and did nothing to help. Only Seohyun was frowning. Seohyun was her only hope. She sneaked a peek at Tiffany but unlike her, Tiffany appeared to be unperturbed by the teasing that was going on. It was a good thing, she supposed.

“Do you cook?” Yoona asked Tiffany after a while and the latter smiled and shook her head.

“I'm not good at it. Neither is Jess. We're more likely to burn the kitchen down than to cook up a storm.”

Jessica pouted.

“It's totally cool if you're not a good cook,” Yuri chimed in and Taeyeon had to bite her tongue to keep from snorting.

“I can cook,” Jessica stated, her pout deepening and Taeyeon could see how Yuri was getting more and more into her. Jessica's pout was cute, and her disinterest in Yuri was refreshing, even to her. It was no wonder that Yuri was so charmed by this new interest. She could see why now.

“I don't think making sandwiches counts as cooking, Jess.”

“Tiff.”

“Yes?”

“Shut up.”

Tiffany laughed out loud. “Okay, I'll shut up.”

Jessica's pout was somewhat cartoonish by now and her eyebrows were joining in the act as well.

“Sandwiches are great for all meals. It's a useful skill you've got there, Jessica,” said Yuri.

Taeyeon chuckled. She'd never thought she'd see Yuri like this. The tables had been flipped and Yuri was now acting like the girls who adored her. This was rich!

“Thanks.” Jessica's pout turned into a gentle smile.

“I'm sure they're delicious too.”

Jessica covered her shy smile with a hand and looked at Yuri. “Not always.”

Taeyeon exchanged looks with Sunny who was seated opposite her and giggled. Sunny waggled her eyebrows and grinned. They understood each other's thoughts perfectly. Yuri was a complete goner and they weren't going to let her off without a truckload of teasing afterwards. Heh.

~

Seohyun volunteered to do the dishes while everyone scooted to the couch to grab a seat. Taeyeon, with her conscience pricking, stayed back to help. She shooed Tiffany to the couch and turned back to join Seohyun in the kitchen.

“Unnie...”

“Hmm?”

“Your girlfriend is very nice.”

Taeyeon beamed from ear to ear. “Yes, she is.”

“You look very happy.”

“I am.”

“Then I'm happy for you, unnie.”

Taeyeon's heart warmed to the sincerity in Seohyun's eyes. “Thanks Seohyun.”

~

Taeyeon returned to the couch with Seohyun and saw that a space had been left beside Tiffany for her. Tiffany patted the space and smiled at her, inviting her with her eyes.

“Alright! Movie timeeee!” cheered her friends as she took her seat and got comfortable. Tiffany linked their arms as though it were the most natural thing to do and placed a palm on her thigh. It was comfortable indeed. Next to Tiffany was Jessica and Yuri had managed to squeeze in between Jessica and the armrest. The rest of her friends were on beanbags and cushions. Everyone was comfy. Sunny pressed a button on the remote and the lights dimmed. It was movie time.

~

Trust Sunny to pick a sappy romance for movie night. Taeyeon rolled her eyes at the choice of film. Was this some sort of match making movie night or what? Then again, maybe it was. Maybe Sunny had chosen it to help Yuri. Or to embarrass her. It was hard to tell. It was also hard to keep from snorting at the cheesy lines. Even harder to stop her hand from wandering up Tiffany's thigh when the characters in the movie began making out. Awkward.

“Wah!” exclaimed Jessica out of the blue and all eyes landed on her. “Look at that kiss!”

“I know right!” Sunny responded at the top of her shrill voice and Taeyeon had the urge to burst into laughter.

Tiffany giggled and Taeyeon blushed when her thigh was squeezed. All movie long, she'd been subjected to Tiffany's heart-fluttering touch, whispers and scent. Her blood was racing all over the place and it was hard to focus on the movie at times. And this squeeze didn't help. It didn't help one bit.

“If she doesn't accept his love, she's an idiot,” concluded Jessica and Sunny nodded in agreement.

“Totally. I hope she isn't that stupid.”

Taeyeon and Tiffany exchanged looks, their lips pressed tight to keep from laughing. There was no doubt that Tiffany too, had seen Yuri gaping at Jessica's sudden outburst of emotion. Poor Yuri. Jessica was unlike any girl she had encountered before and it was a steep learning curve for her. But even before she began pitying Yuri, she had herself to pity first. She was having trouble breathing now that Tiffany decided to lay her head on her shoulder. It was getting harder and harder to keep her hands still. Especially with their recent makeout session still a vivid memory that replayed in her mind with startling clarity. Help.

“Anyone needs a drink? I'm gonna get one from the kitchen,” asked Taeyeon. A cold shower was out of the question but a cold drink might help.

“Ice cream?” asked Jessica.

“Sure, we have ice cream. Chocolate?”

“Okay.”

“I'll get it for you. I need a drink too.” Yuri stood and headed to the kitchen even before Taeyeon could move.

“Tiffany...?” Taeyeon asked.

“No thanks, honey.”

More eyes landed on Taeyeon and she ducked away quickly, blushing. She entered the kitchen and the sight of Yuri taking out a tub of chocolate ice cream from the fridge greeted her. “You're an embarrassment to us, Kwon Yuri.”

“You're not allowed to laugh at me...*honey*.”

Taeyeon blushed but refused to let Yuri get the better of her. “Why not? You're so whipped and you two aren't even an item yet,” she pressed on.

“That's because you conveniently left out the fact that Jessica was coming. I was lying on your lap when she came and you just happily let me lie there. In this drabby outfit,” Yuri hissed, her arms gesturing at her hoodie and sweatpants to get her point across.

But Taeyeon was more amused than ever. “Jessica doesn't seem to mind your outfit.”

Yuri huffed and flipped her hair with extravagance. “That's because I'm so hot that it doesn't matter.”

“Urgh,” went Taeyeon, making gagging noises and Yuri smacked her butt hard in retaliation. “Oww!”

“Grow up, kiddo. You're about as mature as a nine-year-old.”

“And you're younger than me so that makes you eight-and-a-half.” Taeyeon stuck her tongue out before grabbing a can of Sprite and making a run for it. She made it back to the couch safely and opened the can. One mouthful of the cold drink later, she felt calmer and ready to take on the world. Yeah, let it rip.

She settled down, confidence renewed and smiled at Tiffany who was cuddling up to her again. No problem. She could handle it. She had a cold drink. Yeah, she ruled the world. Yuri returned a moment later and handed Jessica the ice cream. The sleeping beauty accepted it with thanks and the rest of the movie played on without disturbances other than Jessica and Sunny's spazz over the passionate scenes.

~

The movie ended and Taeyeon heaved a sigh of relief. Thank goodness everything had gone smoothly and nothing embarrassing had happened. Hurray. She watched as Tiffany headed for the bathroom and stood up to stretch. Only, she'd forgotten about the drink can she'd left on the floor by her feet after finishing it and that was the very thing she stepped on. From then on, everything seemed to be happening in slow-motion. She could feel the can wobbling as she tried to maintain her balance but it rolled too far out and her body weight veered right, then left, then right again. The next thing she knew, she'd fallen backwards, crashing into Jessica who was just getting up and they both fell onto the couch.

Taeyeon winced as a shrill scream rang out. Surely, a voice like that could shatter glass.

“Your hand!” Jessica shrieked.

“Huh?” Taeyeon looked at her hand. Homaaageerrddd. Why was it on Jessica's...chest? How did it get there? And why was it holding her? Her mind exploded in sheer horror and of all times, that was when her fingers decided to twitch.

“Eek!” Jessica shrieked again and launched a full scale attack on her. She retracted her hand in a hurry and yelped as Jessica shoved her so hard that she rolled off the couch and onto the floor with a loud thud.

“Taeyeon!” Tiffany exclaimed, squatting beside Taeyeon to help her up. “Are you alright?”

Taeyeon groaned as she got to her feet. The first thing she saw when she looked up was an astounded

Yuri whose jaw was hanging loose on its hinges. The next thing she saw was Jessica's crimson red face and an accusing finger pointing in her face.

“Pervert!”

“I'm sorry, I didn't mean to!” Taeyeon tried to explain, desperate in her hope that Tiffany wasn't going to think the worst of her after this. “I-M-My fingers, my fingers were being weird!”

“Jess, I'm sure Taeyeon didn't do it on purpose.”

“I swear, I didn't even know what I was touching until you screamed at me.”

“What am I? A brick wall?” Jessica retorted.

“I'm sorry. Really sorry,” Taeyeon apologized from behind Tiffany. “I didn't mean to.”

“Jess...it was an accident.”

Taeyeon watched with fearful eyes as Jessica took several deep breaths. Jessica was kind of scary. Was Yuri afraid too? Yuri looked more stunned than afraid but then again, maybe this was the sort of fiery girl she liked. Yuri's taste in ladies was varied and Taeyeon couldn't be sure.

“You're right.” Jessica's flare of anger had seemingly dissipated into thin air with the few seconds and she was beginning to look a little embarrassed. “I'm sorry.”

Taeyeon shook her head, her relief flooding her as she said, “It's alright.”

“Then everything is alright! It's just a misunderstanding,” chirped Sunny and that was the end of that as the rest of her friends began laughing at the hilarity of the entire incident. Yes, trust Yuri, Sooyoung, Yoona and Sunny to find it funny when it was, in fact, insanely embarrassing. Dang it. Even Tiffany was laughing. And to think she'd been so close to getting through this whole night unscathed too.

Shit.

~

Jessica and Tiffany bid their goodbyes to the others at the door but Taeyeon and Yuri went down with them to their cars.

“Thanks for having us. I had a good time,” said Jessica. “Sorry about that blow up.”

“Don't worry about it. Join us again, we'll welcome you with open arms,” said Yuri and Taeyeon nearly snorted. *We? Open arms? Your open arms, you mean.*

“Goodnight, Taeyeon.” Tiffany hugged her and kissed her cheek, causing a blush to spread rapidly across her skin. “I had a great time tonight.”

“Me too. Goodnight, Tiffany. Drive safe and call me when you get home.”

“I will.”

Taeyeon and Yuri stood and watched as Jessica and Tiffany got into their cars and started the engines. Then, they waved as the cars pulled out of the parking lots and headed out to the road. As soon as the cars disappeared from view, Taeyeon found herself being shaken violently by a certain girl who was beside herself with exhilaration.

“Ommaigeerrddd Taeyeon! Jessica knows who I am now!”

That was the last straw, as the madness of the whole episode crashed and swooshed over her like a tidal wave and Taeyeon burst into laughter, loud and unbridled as Yuri shook her.

“Hey, stop laughing. You'll hurt my feelings, you know.”

But Taeyeon couldn't stop. The most ridiculous crap just had to hit on her tonight. And Yuri's plight was just plain funny. To think a popular girl like Yuri had to contend with a super duper strange girl like Jessica when she had the entire forest at her disposal. The whole thing was just one gigantic joke.

“She might have forgotten your name by Monday,” Taeyeon teased and regretted instantly for she found herself being shaken again.

“No. No way. Shit. She won't.”

Taeyeon squirmed out of Yuri's grip and shrugged. “Guess we'll find out on Monday. You still crashing the lecture?”

“Of course. I'll definitely be there.”

Taeyeon grinned. She definitely looked forward to Monday now.

The shit was on!



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