

A LOT LIKE YESTERDAY

By: [theninthtrack](#)

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To the stranger whom I shall meet: I hope for you to become what I will be to you (an unending book, a 4am sky, the 6 o'clock sunrise, the one, the only one) some time in this lifetime.

Prologue

The music was blasting from her earphones, deafening even those around her, but Tiffany remained unfazed and kept her eyes on the view flashing by. The night was starting to creep in and the moment the sun was out of view she felt more at ease. Darkness had a way with her and she was already thinking of the places she could get lost in dancing, intoxicated bodies pressing up against her. She lowered the volume when it was her stop, only to bring it notches higher after she said goodnight to the bus driver.

The streets were wet and empty. Tiffany took a deep breath. The rain of moments ago cleaned the air and now it filled her with a dizzying nostalgia. She kicked up a few leaves and hummed a lullaby on her way, but it did nothing to ease the pressure on her lungs. The night was young anyways – there'd be enough time for that later at the club, she thought.

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"What's a night out going to hurt?"

Taeyeon took out a bottle of water from the fridge and brought it up to her forehead. It cooled instantly and she heaved a sigh of relief before she turned to her friend.

"You need to get over him," she said, now pressing the bottle against her neck. The cold made her shiver a bit, but she was so hot it was almost unbearable. She decided to never go jogging again.

"I know that," Hyoyeon croaked. Buried in a sea of pillows, her head emerged when Taeyeon sighed deeply and walked up to the couch she was glued to.

"I know this is hard for you," Taeyeon coaxed, "but you need to get out of the house. You worry me." She weaved her fingers through Hyoyeon's hair in an attempt to untangle the locks.

It was a strange sight to Taeyeon. All she ever saw in her friend were smiles and laughter. She beamed even in the most darkest times and Taeyeon had envied her ability to stand so strong. Seeing now how Hyoyeon was wrapped in her blanket, maybe with the thought of suffocating herself, she felt like really seeing her for the first time.

Hyoyeon looked at her with heavy eyes and groaned. "Don't pity me. Don't."

Taeyeon shook her head. "I'm not. Just go out with me tonight okay?" She stroke Hyoyeon's head some more and felt her nod against her hand.

It was a silent triumph; Taeyeon kissed her temple and muttered a thank you, all the while handing her a few more pillows to drown in. She was sure to make it an unforgettable night.

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The club was more crowded than usual and Tiffany had a hard time getting to the bar. She was greeted with a nod when she sat down. Her dress rode up when she did, baring her thigh. It was smooth under the dim lights and she could feel the stare of a few men in the corner. Scoffing, she ordered a martini and sipped it quietly, eyeing the dancing crowd.

“Keep the martini’s coming until I say stop,” she said to the bartender. He nodded knowingly and served her another glass, shifting it to her over the counter.

“This one’s on the house, sweetie,” he winked and Tiffany smiled gratefully.

The DJ had been playing for a mere hour and she could tell people were already in the possession of music. The way their bodies did their dance and seemed to float on the dance floor made her want to be part of it.

She scooted off her chair and made her way to the center, all the while having every eye on her. She flashed her signature smile and swung her hips to the rhythm as her dress flowed around her and suddenly Tiffany felt so much better. Dancing the night away wouldn’t be hard this way.

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“I’m sorry, you go ahead and dance. I’m not feeling well,” Hyoyeon smiled apologetically to the guy and let out a long sigh as soon as he was out of sight.

“I should be the one sighing,” Taeyeon said, “You’ve been rejecting guys left and right. Just have some fun, will you?”

Hyoyeon shook her head and took a sip from her drink instead. “You were the one who dragged me out here.”

Taeyeon nodded solemnly, pursing her lips at the sight of Hyoyeon ordering another drink. At least she was trying, Taeyeon knew she was.

In the corner of her eye, she could see groups of people shifting on the dance floor. Some guys were calling out to someone and through the sea of people she caught a glimpse of

a pair of deep brown eyes. It wasn't such a surprise, she thought, that it got the attention of almost everyone there as it looked right back into hers for a second.

"What are you looking at?" Hyoyeon asked and Taeyeon nodded her head to the girl now in full view, dancing effortlessly in the swamp of people.

"She's good," Hyoyeon mumbled. Taeyeon nodded stupidly in reply, her steps already halfway to the dance floor when Hyoyeon stopped her.

"Where are you going? You're going to join her?"

"I don't know," Taeyeon answered.

She just knew she wanted to look into her eyes again. The long lashes didn't make them beautiful, nor were it the twinkles in them. Taeyeon thought, maybe wrongly, she didn't care, that they held so many things she wanted to know about. Things maybe she already knew about and could understand.

The music started to fade out and the DJ announced the next track with much enthusiasm. And before she could utter a word to Hyoyeon, to get out of there, to chase after the girl, she was gone.

Taeyeon stared at the entrance where the girl fled with disappointment and thought it was strange that her feelings were already mixed with some kind of sadness.

The I In Your Eyes – 0.1

The sunbeams were too strong even as she was wide awake, but Tiffany seemed blissfully deep in her sleep as her chest rose and fell, hair messy in an oddly beautiful way. Yuri slipped off the bed expertly and headed to the bathroom. The running water made Tiffany stir awake and soon Yuri could see her silhouette through the damp glass door, brushing her teeth.

“No hangover?” Yuri asked through the streams of water.

Tiffany shook her head and spit out her toothpaste before speaking. “Class is starting soon, so hurry.”

The shower got turned off and Yuri’s head peeked out. “You looked pretty while you were sleeping.”

Tiffany looked at her reflection in the mirror; tousled hair that flew in ten directions, an over-sized shirt slipping off her shoulder and eyebrows drawn over her tired eyes. She didn’t believe her one bit.

“Thanks.”

“I mean it. Want to date me yet?”

“No. I like my girls not watching me in my sleep.”

“Ah. Too bad.”

Tiffany rinsed her face and quickly dried it with a towel. She looked at herself in the mirror again, wet drops trailing down to her chin. At some point, she couldn’t tell whether they were tears or simply water, but today they were just water, she knew. It took some time, but there weren’t unwanted tears spilling out anymore.

Yuri was quicker than normal and she smiled at her as she strutted out to the living room, wrapped up in a towel. Tiffany could hear the fridge open with a light squeak and she took off her clothes leisurely, sighing heavily as she got into the shower.

The water hit her hard – the drops dived mercilessly onto her skin and they numbed her comfortably, wetting her long hair. Tiffany had stayed like this before, standing endlessly in the shower. It was somehow comforting that no one was able to see her cry. She was having none of that now and finding herself growing stronger was a small relief.

When she entered the living room, Yuri was already done with breakfast and she sat idly on the couch reading a paper. She was still in her towel and the back of the couch was wet from the excess water her hair had.

"There's cereal," Yuri said, not looking up.

She watched Tiffany trip over her pants, trying to get it on and smirked when her long shirt got caught on the zipper.

"Great," Tiffany muttered and threw a glare Yuri's way when she turned around and saw her watch her with amusement.

"I'd say, go with just that shirt of yours. You're hot anyways."

Tiffany rolled her eyes and decided on a skirt in the end, briskly leaving the apartment.

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"How's Hyoyeon?"

The cafeteria wasn't very much crowded and they sat at their usual spot, on the far right next to the windows. Taeyeon sighed and shook her head.

"We need more ice-cream. I don't think she'll get over him any time soon."

"Hmm." Jessica stirred her coffee. "The night out didn't help, huh."

"No, but-, I mean, at least she went with me." Taeyeon quickly covered her slip and looked at Jessica carefully. She drank her coffee obliviously.

"Well, that's true. I'll get some Ben & Jerry's on the way to your apartment."

It really wasn't anything to hide – Taeyeon really didn't think it was something to be ashamed of. She was a faint memory of that night, something like that one pretty flower on the side of the road on the way to her parents, or the refreshing rain on a sunny day.

It wasn't so much of a crush – Taeyeon didn't think it was a crush, but the more she thought about her, the more she knew she wanted to see her again. It unsettled her and Taeyeon wondered if telling her friends about it would have it escalate to something more than just that uncomfortable feeling.

Jessica was quiet and paid way more attention to the flyer on the table than needed, but then she looked up, as if sensing something and eyed Taeyeon carefully.

“There’s something.”

“What?”

“You don’t have to tell, but I know there’s something.”

Taeyeon feigned surprise and knit her eyebrows together. “Yeah. Sure.”

Jessica shrugged, a small smile on her lips. It made Taeyeon nervous somehow, as if Jessica had gone through her mind and fished out untold thoughts.

“It’s just...,” she began and just as the words left her mouth, she was speechless. She didn’t know where to begin or what to say altogether. She looked Jessica in the eye and suddenly felt very stupid.

“Ah,” Jessica said, “That look, I haven’t seen it around much lately.”

“What?” Taeyeon asked, confused.

“Sometimes you have that look,” Jessica sipped her coffee, “When you think really hard about something and everything that’s in your mind turns to dots when you really want them to be words.”

“Yeah,” Taeyeon said, “Exactly.”

“But I’m not a mind-reader, you know? I won’t know until you tell me.”

She nodded absentmindedly and played with the tissues on the table. Maybe it was just all in her head, where she created an illusion of some sort, drew moons and stars from a simple eye contact and made herself believe to see stardust fly when that girl turned and her hair flew. Maybe feeling like this was all her own doing.

“I know,” she looked at Jessica, “But it seems silly now, thinking back on it.”

“Maybe it is,” Jessica looked back, “maybe not at all.”

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“They don’t have nice food here.”

“They do,” Sunny said, “You just need to go with me, I know what’s delicious.”

Tiffany reluctantly followed her pull and got a plate shoved in her hands as soon as they got to the food.

"Hamburgers? No. Bread? No. But they have delicious French fries here."

"It's noon."

"It's food."

Tiffany couldn't disagree with that. She had skipped breakfast this morning and Yuri wasn't any help when she threw her a half-eaten sandwich when they bumped into each other in the hallway. French fries would do, even if it meant running half a mile more.

"I was planning on eating healthier," Sunny said as they sat down in a corner, "but college life won't allow unfortunately. Because, you know, here we are." She presented the plate of fries on her hands neatly and faked a smile that had Tiffany burst out in laughter.

"I can see its effect on you already."

"Oh?"

"Nice belly."

A French fly flew to her head and she managed to dodge it expertly. Grinning, she took a sip of her drink and scanned the tables around them.

"You think everyone's at home studying for the upcoming finals?"

"Probably," Sunny munched her fries, "They're not geniuses like you."

"Hey," Tiffany narrowed her eyes, "I work hard, okay?"

"I know, that's why I'm making sure you eat." A handful of fries got shoved in her mouth and Tiffany felt so very happy she could cry. She smiled at the big laughter her friend let out, holding onto her stomach and throwing her head back and decided to not take revenge and ruin this beautiful moment.

"Thank you," she said softly, "for making me smile today."

Her own laughter made Sunny deaf to the words, but she was grateful for the same warmth in her heart.

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The night air was relieving, slightly chilly, but it made her senses come to life as the hairs on her back stood up every time a breeze blew by. She breathed in deep and smiled at the fog coming from her mouth. She imagined them to be clouds when she was younger and when she did, she could get lost in that haze.

"I saw you at the cafeteria this afternoon."

She turned around and was met with a dark silhouette. She didn't really want to, but she smiled and nodded.

"I saw you, too."

Tiffany stepped forward, into the light now, where Taeyeon could see her more clearly. Her hair was a bit lighter than she remembered and her face more soft, but the eyes were the same eyes she looked into and Taeyeon somehow wished they wouldn't ever change. How stupid, she thought, I sound so stupid.

The wind blew again and Taeyeon had the urge to move closer to her. She looked really cold, but Taeyeon thought she could make her feel very warm if she went closer.

"I know. You didn't say hi though."

"You didn't either."

Tiffany breathed through her nose, but the smile she gave was pretty and Taeyeon didn't know why she had to feel so defensive about this. She tried again.

"I didn't want to disturb you."

"Well, that was very nice of you." Tiffany looked at her again with a smile and she really didn't have much of a choice but to smile back.

"What's your name?" she asked.

Tiffany cocked her head and her smile turned into a light grin. "Maybe next time, if we ever see each other again."

Taeyeon chuckled, "And when will that happen? Don't you want to know my name?"

The distance between them had gotten smaller. Tiffany didn't know why, didn't understand why, but she liked conversations like these. Really odd, out of the blue talks

with a complete stranger she had met once while clubbing and then twice again on the same day shortly after. It wasn't common anymore to find nice strangers, but the girl smiled really happily when she saw her and maybe feeling connected didn't always have to be with the ones close to you.

"Do you dance?"

"I don't," Taeyeon smiled sadly, "but I know you do, really well."

Her cheeks grew slightly pink at the compliment and she mumbled a thank you when she looked her in the eyes.

"I don't know why," Taeyeon said, "but it feels like we've known each other for a really long time. Don't you think?"

"Yeah," Tiffany nodded, "It feels nice."

"It does," Taeyeon agreed.

The streets were strangely empty, as if everyone had hidden themselves and left the two of them to be alone together. Tiffany kicked a rock to the curb and for a split second, she wondered if they'd ever meet again.

"I'll be the first one to say hi next time we meet," Taeyeon smiled, reading Tiffany's mind, "In turn, you have to tell me your name. I'd really like to know it."

"I'm sure we'll meet again," Tiffany said, hoped.

Taeyeon looked at her and wanted to come closer again.

"We met now, didn't we?" she said, "So we'll meet again. We will."

Tiffany's smile was with a tinge of amusement and she looked back at Taeyeon, the girl she somehow really liked.

"Buy me dinner next time then. I look forward to it."

We Met In Storms of Petals - 0.2

The rain wouldn't stop falling and it clattered hard against her window as she turned on her side for the tenth time. April last year was really lonely, but the drops falling hard on her roof now made her feel less like it. Like fellow companions, falling altogether, she felt comforted in a very suffocating way – Tiffany never really knew when to stop falling and whether there'd still be drops falling with her if she did.

The cell phone on her desk buzzed.

-Won't be home tonight. Lock the doors, sweetie.-

Tiffany sighed and turned to the clock that said 11PM.

The bed creaked when she got out, the blanket drooping off the bed. She looked at it as she turned at the door and had the urge to wrap it all around herself, sink in its fabric and maybe, she would sleep forever in its warmth. It was really tempting to crawl back into bed and never wake up again. She just wanted to feel warm with the blankets all around her.

The cell phone in her hand buzzed again and she knew it was Yuri telling her to go sleep. She smiled at her accurate guess as the letters lighted up the screen and she slowly walked to the kitchen.

Yuri didn't cook, but Tiffany did and the fridge was splattered with pictures and random drawings. Yuri wouldn't have any of it, but she thought it was nice to see how easily memories could be made and how they could be kept so beautifully, on fridges and walls and if they'd stayed there, they'd be kept in hearts as well.

She stood behind the counter and right from where she was, she looked straight into the picture. It had been two years and eleven days and she watched her with eyes so hopeful she felt bad for ever wanting to look away.

"I'm doing better," Tiffany said quietly. The words traveled languidly through the space to the living room and echoed against the walls.

"They're taking care of me. So don't worry."

The silence after engulfed her right away and it made her silent as well, her throat closing up quickly as she tilted her head back, keeping in tears.

She smiled through the lone tear trickling down her face and its warmth made her feel

consoled in the cold kitchen. She stood there for so long her legs started to get tired.

Tiffany wouldn't ever be able to get over this – she couldn't ever bury this away and smile while talking about her, she would always feel the ache and it would always be lonely thinking about her, but she was able to get up and see lights at the end of streets, smell rain and laugh at stupid jokes now.

She sighed heavily when she returned to her bed. It still looked so tempting now, but so much more because it was past midnight and she was really tired.

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Sunny was the first to groan and complain about being tired, sitting on a lone rock as Tiffany continued walking.

They walked around like kids going on adventures with swords fighting dragons, but they really were adults, twenty years of age and paving ways through the woods on the day they should be revising notes and memorizing stuff worth five textbooks.

"Come on, don't be such a–"

"I have these back issues!" Sunny cried out.

It was enough to draw out a grin from Tiffany and she walked back to sit next to Sunny, rubbing her back lightly, albeit nagging her to go have it checked.

"I know, I know," Sunny sighed, "I'll do that after the finals. You confident?"

Tiffany nodded, still rubbing her back, "I don't think I'd fail, if that's what you're asking."

"Yeah, you've been keeping up on every class like crazy. I'm sure you'll do well."

"How about you?"

"I'm going to nail it, of course," Sunny said, tilting up her chin with a smirk.

"I thought so."

"Really. I will."

"Uhuh."

"Hey Tiff...", Sunny said quietly after a while, "Aren't you scared?"

Tiffany didn't look at her, but instead picked up pieces of grass and let them fly with the wind. "Of what?"

Sunny sighed and Tiffany could tell it was important. She let the grass go and looked up to her.

"Of the future. What happens after we graduate? Will we find work? Will things change?"

Change. Tiffany had hated change since so long. It shifted everything out of place, wouldn't let her get used to it and time did nothing but pass by, let everything go to waste as she tried to cope with it. Change was an awful thing in Tiffany's eyes, but halfway through she did realize that you couldn't really spend the rest of your life not changing at all. You wouldn't make it through that way.

The path they made on their way here was gone and it made them feel like they landed on this spot, just like that, from the sky down. It felt good somehow, to end up nowhere really, and still have each other.

"I don't know," Tiffany answered honestly, "But I'm scared as well."

The only response she got was a head on her shoulder, but for now that was enough as she laid her head down on hers.

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Her father's face had stiffened when she got home one day. Her mother was cooking dinner, her back turned to her and she wordlessly sat down when Taeyeon entered the room. She knew what it was about, she had expected this, prepared for the confrontation the moment she opened the door, but knew as soon as her father looked at her with eyes so disappointedly that he wouldn't ever be okay with this.

"I'm sorry," she had said, "I'm sorry."

He could only heave a sigh and leave the room fill with a silence that haunted her till this day. Her mother had looked at her with sad eyes, unsupportive eyes, and stood back up to cook dinner, left her to fight the battle alone.

The walls were empty when she moved in to this new place and she slept on an uncomfortable mattress for the first year, the cold floor seeping through every so often. Taeyeon was never really cold though, because she had found herself after a long journey and that was all she really wanted as she went through phases in which she wanted nothing more than to disappear from the world. She had found a way to love

herself for who she was, but it got really lonely sometimes, once in a while very late at night, when she thought about how her parents couldn't.

The front door shot open and she was brought back to the present, finding herself clutching her mug of chocolate milk, the radio buzzing loudly – failing to be rightly tuned.

“Geez, turn that thing off, will you?”

Hyoyeon's grumbling continued as she took off her shoes and Taeyeon quickly noticed her bad mood, shutting off the radio immediately.

“Where have you been?”

“Mom's been nagging to me about the break-up. Can't get her to shut up about it.”

“She's worried,” Taeyeon said with a hint of hidden sadness.

“Yeah right, I'm sure she is.”

The silence after made Hyoyeon look up to Taeyeon and she recognized the sad glint in her eyes. It had happened so many times before, but Hyoyeon beat herself up for it each time. Taeyeon knew and told her once it was alright, because truthfully she didn't want to be treated like glass. The more she thought about it, the more she thought of herself as broken glass – more than anything. She wouldn't ever be truly whole and the ones around her, Hyoyeon, would only get hurt seeing her like that. Would only get hurt, trying to look past that.

“I'm okay,” she said and made an effort to smile as genuine as possible.

Hyoyeon eyed her suspiciously and wanted to come closer when she suddenly shot up, almost spilling her chocolate milk, and rushed out of the living room.

“I forgot about my assignment. Need to get it done now.”

The door to bedroom closed with a small click and the only thing she left behind were some spilled tears, staining the couch.

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The air was foggy and with each breath she felt more free. She had probably run about four miles now, blood was rushing to her head, throbbing and almost painfully, but her legs wouldn't stop and so she didn't. Taeyeon ran for another mile until finally her legs

gave up and she had to catch her breath.

Somehow she ended up at the beach. It was probably around 3AM, the waves crashing but invisible to her eyes. She sat down and closed her eyes to imagine them.

When she opened her eyes, everything was dark and she could barely see the lone figure at the opposite side of the beach. She rubbed her eyes feverishly and gripped her own shirt in fear – it was 3AM after all.

The sand underneath her left marks on her skin as she carefully lifted herself up. One, two, three, and she would run, as fast as she could. Taeyeon looked back once more and the black silhouette was gone and waves of shivers gave her goosebumps. She really hated this.

“Boo. I’m a ghost,” Tiffany said dryly, an evil smirk evident on her lips.

The raspy voice made Taeyeon jump and she let out a weird squeak, suddenly facing a body radiating warmth.

“Aren’t you afraid of being kidnapped or something?”

“Who would want to kidnap me?” Taeyeon asked, catching her breath.

“I don’t know, but you’re pretty cute.”

Her eyes got used to the dark now and she looked at Tiffany more carefully – her hair was in a messy bun and she wore jogging pants and a lousy jacket.

“Aren’t you cold?” she asked, ignoring the compliment.

Tiffany shook her head slowly, almost adorably and she grinned as she looked at her. She took a step closer, into Taeyeon’s personal space.

“We’ll cuddle,” she said simply.

The mischief in Tiffany’s eyes said enough, but Taeyeon wrapped her arms around her anyway.

“Is this better?” she mumbled.

She could feel Tiffany chuckle against her hair and her whisper tickled her ear so badly, it drove her spinning.

“Do *you* feel warm?”

She breathed in deep, breathed in her smell and it was so weird, because they barely knew each other, she didn’t know her name and – she didn’t know her name.

“What’s your name?” She looked up eagerly.

“You should’ve asked before you went on and hugged me like this. Now I don’t feel like saying it.”

“Tell me your name,” Taeyeon said, eyes looking deep into hers.

Suddenly they were pressed against each other and Taeyeon had to go back and think, remember who was the one moving closer. Their faces were just an inch apart and then she realized she was still hugging her, making her feel warm, keeping her safe in the middle of the night. She looked at her expectantly, wanting an answer.

She got a smirk in response, but then her lips were hovering over hers and then hovered over the soft skin of her jaw, moving up to her ear. Taeyeon held her tighter, kept her hands occupied, because her body was about to do things she couldn’t control.

“My name...,” she whispered, blew playfully in her ear, “is Tiffany.”

There Are No Wings For Souls Like Us – 0.3

“Where were you?”

The sun was in its full view and Tiffany held up her hand, letting the rays flow through the spaces of her fingers. Yuri had laid her head on her stomach and played with her hair.

“Out,” she answered curtly.

“I came back at five and you weren’t here,” Yuri rested her hand on her head, “Got a lover?”

“What if I do?” Tiffany wiggled her eyebrows.

“Wouldn’t be the first time. I bet she’s hot.”

“Hmm,” Tiffany thought for a while, “She seems very nice.”

“Is she hot though?” Yuri pressed and her hand flowed through her hair again.

“I like her,” she said. And huh, Tiffany thought, as she said the words. It wouldn’t be the first time for her to admit something like that so simply, but she remembered her smile more clearly than anything and perhaps that meant something, because Tiffany had purposely forgotten so many kisses and so many names in the last few years.

“I think you do,” Yuri said thoughtfully and smiled down at her, planting a kiss on her forehead. “I still hope she’s hot,” she mumbled and that earned her a playful jab in the ribs.

“Shut up,” Tiffany laughed and set her head back down gently on Yuri’s stomach.

Yuri’s fingers went through her hair again and she smoothed out the tangled locks with a smile.

“So she’s the one you spent the whole night and morning with?”

Tiffany clicked her tongue and sat up, turning her body to Yuri. Her expression was pensive and she stayed quiet for so long Yuri felt something was off. Tiffany didn’t seem to move, but then she sat up straight and sighed.

“Yuri,” she said slowly, “I should stop fooling around, don’t you think?”

The grin Yuri gave was lop-sided and she cocked her head to the side, eyeing Tiffany. "I don't think you've ever played with anyone's feelings."

"No, I haven't," Tiffany confirmed, "But I always end up waking up alone." She looked at her. "Or with you. But that's because your bed is really nice."

"Are you saying you don't like waking up with me?"

"I'm saying you have a nice bed, but that it's not enough."

She folded her legs and rested her arms in her lap. She looked down at her hands.

"I think Jen doesn't like me fooling around."

The tone in her voice took a sudden serious turn and Yuri's lips slowly returned from their curve, setting into a thin line.

"I haven't dreamt of her in a while," Tiffany continued softly, "Maybe seeing me with all those people makes her uncomfortable. She doesn't seem to like it."

"You won't become like me, if that's what you're afraid of," Yuri said. The sentence rang minutes after in the small space of their living room. The frown on Tiffany's face was borderline sad, but she shrugged off the worry and pursed her lips.

"Don't look at me like that. I've gotten used to it." Her eyes weren't on Tiffany anymore. "It gets lonely sometimes, but it's one of those things you'll get used to with time."

The words rested neatly between them and Yuri found them to be so true it hurt. Loneliness wouldn't get to her anymore; it had made her prison of it, have her claw at it whenever she kissed a random stranger. It made her want it, come back to it after awkward morning afters and resolutely, in the end, it didn't get to her anymore, because it became a feeling that had more of her than anything else. She felt Tiffany's eyes on her and forced out a grin.

"It's true," she said, "It's not that bad."

Tiffany didn't speak, but wordlessly she scooted closer, touched her face with the back of her fingers. Her eyes traced every bit of her, from her straight dark eyebrows to the long eyelashes and that mischievous hint on her lips that would forever be.

If Tiffany could only shrink to a size so small she could find a way to penetrate through Yuri's skin, she would, and then she'd find her way to her heart; caress it, nourish it until

it grew twice its size. But Tiffany wouldn't ever be the one to do that, wouldn't be able to tell her things would get better – she couldn't feed Yuri the kind of love she needed.

"I'll make dinner tonight," was the only thing Tiffany could promise her and Yuri's smile wasn't the only way that showed she was thankful as she drew her in for a hug.

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"What is the theory of Trias Politica?"

"Oh, yeah," Sunny blew her gum, "Something about separating powers. Locke and Montesquieu."

"I see you've studied," Tiffany grinned and poked Sunny with her pencil.

Sunny shrugged nonchalantly and brushed her shoulder, "I told you I'd ace it. No biggie."

Tiffany only chuckled and closed her book, set it aside. They were waiting for the last classes of the day and she was already bored out of her mind as she looked at the clock and saw that only fifteen minutes had gone by.

"Want to ditch classes with me today?" she asked monotonously, resting her head on her palms.

"Hmm." It sounded very much appealing. The last few classes before finals were barely any help – lectures last minutes were for small reminders, little tips that they didn't need. Sunny didn't look like she cared much, but Montesquieu would like her very much if he was still alive.

"Go for a run? Have some drinks at the café?" Tiffany suggested. Sunny shook her head and she scanned the campus slowly. She smirked, stood up from the bench and held out her hand to Tiffany.

"Are you in for some fun?"

Tiffany followed her gaze and she squinted her eyes, recognizing the dark jacket she had seen just this morning. Sunny was probably eyeing the girl next to her, clad in tight jeans and a hugging shirt, but anyhow, Tiffany was definitely in for some fun.

"You bet," she grinned and took Sunny's hand. They made their way towards them as casually as possible.

The line was long enough for them to trail behind them unnoticed for a good few

minutes, but they needed to get closer, Tiffany especially needed to get closer, and there was this guy standing in between them.

“Do something,” Sunny said through gritted teeth to her, “Smile, touch, grind him – whatever, we need to be behind them.”

She looked around and the line had stopped just behind them, the snack car would soon go she suspected. Her lips grew the most charming smile as she made eye contact with him. She lightly touched his forearm with the tips of her fingers, digging them just very lightly into his skin.

“Excuse me,” she whispered, hoping the girls just in front of him wouldn’t miraculously recognize her voice in the midst of numerous laughter and talks, “My friend and I are in a hurry. Do you mind if we take your spot in the line?”

The guy seemed reluctant at first, but Tiffany slid her hand up just slightly causing friction between their skins.

“Yeah, sure,” he smiled back eventually. Tiffany’s own grew wider and she bit her lip shyly as she took Sunny’s hand and they stepped past him. Sunny had to hold down the urge to roll her eyes, because when was Tiffany ever shy? She squeezed her hands anyway, as to say good job.

The line moved forward and the two girls in front of them now chatted on obliviously. Tiffany could tell Sunny was planning on something, because despite having succeeded in getting closer to them, they still had no idea how to make this ‘fun’. Their eyes roamed around the campus and the line moved forward again.

“There,” Sunny nudged her and Tiffany could see a young man walking towards them. Her eyes lit up and she looked back at Sunny with a knowing smile.

As he approached them, she counted down his steps and when he broke through the line and walked past them, Tiffany’s hand swiftly found the behind of the girl in front of her, giving it a firm squeeze before retracting like nothing happened. The girl muttered a curse and looked after who she thought was the culprit, as if the ground would swallow him whole if her stare was hard enough.

Tiffany quickly looked the other way as she turned her back, seemingly as to see whether anyone had seen the incident. She held down a snigger when she looked right into the eyes of Taeyeon. Her lips curved up.

“Tiffany?”

“Hi,” she smirked.

In the corner of her eye, she could see Sunny look at her questionably and the expression the girl wore next to Taeyeon wasn’t any different. Tiffany decided to break the awkward silence.

“I’m Tiffany, a friend of Taeyeon,” she introduced herself and turned to Sunny, her lips curving in a slight grin, “Taeyeon’s a new friend of mine,” she told her.

“I’m Jessica,” the girl next to Taeyeon smiled and Sunny introduced herself a second later, eyeing the stare down between Tiffany and Taeyeon.

It was suspicious to say the least, but Sunny felt like things fell in place when Tiffany spoke again.

“That guy must’ve thought you were cute, getting all bold like that.”

Taeyeon looked at her carefully, “Right. I guess so. He wasn’t exactly tactful about it.”

“He wasn’t,” Tiffany shook her head, unable to hide her smirk, “Probably had a hard time controlling himself.”

“You don’t say.”

They looked at each other for the longest time and Sunny soon cleared her throat, feeling uncomfortable being there at all. She was sure Jessica felt the same.

“It’s our turn. We’ll order something for you guys, so you can– I mean, yeah, catch up or something.”

Tiffany nodded, smiled at Jessica and followed Taeyeon to a picnic table just a few meters away.

“You still haven’t bought me dinner,” Tiffany said as soon as they sat down.

“Hmm,” Taeyeon pulled down the zipper of her jacket, “You mean a butt squeeze is not enough?”

“I barely grazed it,” Tiffany sighed. She watched her take off her jacket in the most adorable way and couldn’t suppress a smile when her arm got stuck.

“But seems like you work out, huh?”

"You sure have guts," Taeyeon muttered and yanked her arm forcefully from the sleeve, "And yeah, I do work out."

"Like, those butt exercises?"

"My butt has always been that nice," Taeyeon smiled and had to laugh at her own feigned arrogance. It filled Tiffany's ears and she scooted closer until there was no space between them, held the inside of Taeyeon's arm lightly with her fingertips.

Taeyeon's body radiated warmth and she looked at her with the softest look ever. She wondered how her look looked like in Taeyeon's eyes, because it somehow made Taeyeon smile as she swept away lost strands of hair from her face.

"Why didn't you kiss me last night?" she asked, out of the blue. The timing perhaps wasn't right, because the girls would join them in a minute and the question would perhaps prompt things they couldn't control, but it had lingered on her mind for longer than it should have had.

Taeyeon breathed and she turned her head to her, their faces close enough to touch.

"Do you like me?" she asked quietly. Her eyes were casted down and she bit her lip in uncertainty. They could hear light chatter coming from behind them and Tiffany looked back quickly to see the girls looking for some napkins, ready to make their way over to them.

She turned back to Taeyeon and she leaned in closer, wouldn't stop pressing her body against her until Taeyeon looked into her eyes. The closeness made her nervous, in so many ways possible, but she closed her eyes and slowly grazed her nose against hers, pressed her lips to the skin of Taeyeon's cheek gently.

The talking behind them grew louder and she sat back and straightened up. The mischief in her eyes was back in an instant as Sunny held out a sandwich and she accepted it gladly, opened her mouth wide enough for Sunny to shove in almost half of it.

Their eyes met for a second after and it was so horribly electrifying, Taeyeon was afraid to come any closer, in fear her heart would stop beating.

Kind Of Like What We Are – 0.4

Her mother had carefully climbed the staircase when she packed her bags. Coming into her room with a sullen expression and looking behind her back carefully, she held her hand softly and stroke her hair gently. She wouldn't get the image out of her mind, even months later.

"Mom," Taeyeon had said, "Do you love me?"

"Of course, of course," her mother had said and she smiled so warmly Taeyeon had almost melted. They were one she had thought – when the world would shift from under her feet, it wouldn't be only her to fall from the sudden change. There would be her mom to hold her and her father to give her wise words. But she had looked down and there were her shirts, folded neatly on top of her jeans and her mother who held her hand, telling her to live well. This was probably the real world, Taeyeon had thought, where mothers say goodbye to their daughters without any tears and fathers look at them like they were sinners. And the world seemed a lot heavier then, right at that moment, because as it had shifted from under her feet, she realized she was the only one falling, after all.

Taeyeon had looked at her mother sadly then and when she didn't say anything, she just threw her arms around her, had hoped that maybe because they shared blood that she could feel things she felt, could tell things from the way her eyes moved or just simply from the way she had held her right now.

Her back was patted awkwardly and she had to bite her tongue so hard that tears were forming. Tears when sad and tears when she was in actual physical pain, were just tears for anyone out there, but then her mother pressed money to the palm of her hand and she almost cried, really cried, because her own mother couldn't see the difference.

Taeyeon had dropped the stash of money on her bed and left with no hesitant steps, even as her mother gave her last nags as she stepped out of the door. She had cried, really cried, after she got the keys to her first apartment, hung paintings on the walls and threw herself on her thin, cold mattress the same night. Because even as they shared blood, her parents couldn't understand that money wasn't what she wanted at all.

*

Hyoyeon was in charge of dinner today. She brought out three plates from the kitchen, balancing them on one arm while her free hand carried their drinks. Hyoyeon looked better these days, Taeyeon thought as she watched her set their food down. Her smile was back – less vibrant, but there, and at least she was trying – Taeyeon couldn't ask for

more.

“That’s probably Jessica,” Hyoyeon said as the doorbell rang, “Open the door for her.”

A gush of cold wind slipped past the door as she opened it and Jessica walked straight to the living room without greeting her.

“How’s our Hyoyeon doing?” Jessica grabbed both her cheeks and squeezed them gently, smiling sweetly at her.

It would’ve made Taeyeon cringe otherwise, but this time it softened her. The sight in front of her spoke of nothing more than love and endearment – it couldn’t be missed, no matter how childish the act seemed to be. They could fight, quarrel, slam doors and poke fun at each other and it would only take a slight slip, a gentle fall, a pinch of pain for them to soften their hearts and hold each other even closer.

Taeyeon shoved Jessica playfully as she passed them and faked a shudder. “You so have the hots for her.”

Jessica glared at her. “I think it’s only you who swings that way,” she said, but the smile on her face was hard to miss and Taeyeon motioned them to sit down at the dining table with a laugh.

“So,” Hyoyeon said as she handed them their plates, “Any news? Gossip?”

“May slept with some guy last night.” Jessica ate from her plate nonchalantly and gestured Taeyeon to pass the salt. “Probably drunk, but still, he was cute.”

“I thought she was dating that guy from our class?” Hyoyeon said confused.

“She was,” Jessica said simply, sprinkling the salt evenly, “Doesn’t stop her from being a – “

“Jessica,” Taeyeon said sternly, looking at her with a frown, “Wasn’t she your friend?”

“Was. Until she slept with half of my male friends.”

Hyoyeon chuckled, “Like you would otherwise.”

Jessica shrugged. “I would if I had no sense of dignity whatsoever.”

“Okay,” Taeyeon said, chewing on her meat, “Let’s stop the talking about past friends.”

“Oh right,” Jessica visibly brightened up, “Let’s talk about new friends. How are yours?”

Taeyeon looked at her, “Mine?”

“Hers?” Hyoyeon asked.

“Apparently Taeyeon here had been doing some socializing,” Jessica patted her shoulder. “Tiffany and Sunny, law students.”

“Oh?” Hyoyeon scooted closer to her, “I sense something going on.”

The atmosphere turned uncomfortable as all the attention shifted to Taeyeon. She felt like being under a magnifying glass and she squirmed in her seat, keeping her eyes on her plate. Broccoli had never looked so interesting before.

“I believe there is something,” Jessica said, watching her play with her piece of vegetable, “Maybe Taeyeon could tell us more about it.”

She looked up and Taeyeon hated that smirk on Jessica’s lips so much, she was thinking of ways to get rid of it – a magical eraser was one.

“There’s nothing to tell,” she said calmly.

“I’m not blind, mind you,” Jessica said, raising her eyebrows at her and hitting her arm, “I saw the smile on that girl’s face, something must’ve happened.”

Nothing happened, really, Taeyeon thought. A hug, a squeeze, a kiss that was hardly scandalous, but really nothing happened. But then again, something did and she didn’t know what.

“She smiles like that to anyone,” she answered, eyeing her cold piece of vegetable now.

“Oh,” Jessica said, seemingly no longer prying. “Well, I don’t know her well enough to say she doesn’t, so...” She looked at her again. “You know her way better, I’m sure you know what you’re talking about.”

Hyoyeon on the other hand sighed heavily and put down her fork to sip her drink. “I was getting all excited for nothing.”

“Hmm,” Jessica agreed, letting the words roll slowly from her tongue, “All... for... nothing.”

The lack of interest now was getting on her nerves and it was probably really stupid to

think so, but Taeyeon thought that maybe, somehow, they could convince her otherwise. Like, maybe, Tiffany didn't smile like that to anyone or that there really was something and that perhaps they hired detectives to find every piece of Tiffany and concluded that mystery by saying; yeah, here you go – these are all yours, take it. But even if that happened, would Tiffany want her though? Because Taeyeon knew she wasn't whole – right now, she was just confused.

"Yeah," she said finally, "We just happen to bump into each other often at night."

She felt their eyes on her, heard a chuckle, probably Hyoyeon, and decided to put that damn cold piece of broccoli in her mouth to chew anyway, occupying it before more utterly stupid words would come out.

*

They ran into each other again, but not really. The beach hummed quietly, the cold bit their exposed skin but they sat next to each other watching waves crash and wind blow by and so it was okay, kind of.

"Ah," Tiffany breathed. She laid down, not caring the sand would hold itself onto her skin, into her hair. She closed her eyes. "Now this is life."

Taeyeon turned her body to look at her, parted pink lips that made that smile. That damn smile. She sighed and turned to watch the water again.

"Come on," Tiffany said after a while, tugging her shirt, "Lie down, it's nice."

"It's four in the morning, we should go home."

The flat tone in Taeyeon's voice wasn't missed by Tiffany and she sat back up, watching her watch the view.

"I like it here," she said simply, "And you don't have classes tomorrow anyway."

"I don't," Taeyeon kept her eyes on the water, "I just feel really tired. Don't you feel tired?"

She looked at her carefully and studied the drooping corners of her lips. "Tired of what, Taeyeon?"

And there it was – the question that had millions of answers, that had millions of ways to word and millions of ways to decipher. Taeyeon was so tired, the weight on her shoulders drilled her down into the ground and everybody noticed, but no one knew the

answer.

"I haven't seen my parents in a really long time," she spoke. The water was rising, she saw. Just an hour or two before it reached them. "I really miss my mom and I really miss her cooking. She always made those spring rolls around this time of the year and I probably lived on it for weeks multiple times."

Tiffany saw her smiling. It was different. From the way her lips curved, to the eyes that grew soft and nostalgic. She saw her fight down a tear and shifted closer.

It wasn't the first time they were this close, but Tiffany had lay down her head on Taeyeon's shoulder and her body hummed a strange melody she could fall deep into. Taeyeon took a deep breath and played with the sand underneath her.

"My father can't cook at all. He was really good with his guitar though. He used to sing me to sleep when I was little."

The silence crept in slowly. They could hear the wind whisper lowly and they stayed like that for a few minutes, because Tiffany thought it was nice and Taeyeon thought it was nice. It was nice to have silence translate the words left hanging in the air.

Tiffany laid back down again, but laced her fingers with Taeyeon instead this time, dragging her down next to her. Taeyeon's hair got tousled, it got into her eyes and Tiffany found them to be more captivating that way, hidden behind dark clouds.

She scooted closer, rested her chin on Taeyeon's shoulder and hummed a melody that was now clear to Taeyeon's ears. It was low, a broken chain of notes, but it buzzed so amazingly against her that she couldn't fight the urge to turn her head to her and just look at her, this girl, this lullaby. Tiffany.

Her stare only made Tiffany hum with more confidence, although still quiet as if to not touch the silence surrounding them. Tiffany smiled as she did and she just looked back, because she had no words at all but this melody and this night.

"Thank you," Taeyeon said, her whisper riding the rhythm of Tiffany's song and she closed her eyes, breathed through her nose, got closer to her.

Their faces weren't touching, but Tiffany felt Taeyeon's breath drawing a path on her skin, circling around, traveling through the tiny hairs, down all the way to her neck, collarbone and back, sending shivers everywhere it went. And as she had no words to comfort Taeyeon, she ran out of them just as much when she tried to convey what she was feeling now. Her humming stopped then and it went quiet for so long, Taeyeon opened her eyes again to find her looking at her.

“Could you stay?” Tiffany whispered.

Taeyeon found the look in her eyes so gentle she unconsciously moved closer, maybe to look into them even more. She smiled weakly.

“Stay where?”

“With me. Just with me.”

Tiffany looked down, her eyelashes sprinkling tickles as they moved nearby Taeyeon’s chin. She breathed deeply. “Could you?”

No words were spoken, but Taeyeon brought her face closely to hers. Their noses brushed slowly and Taeyeon’s breath did what it did again, with all the hairs standing up and waves running down Tiffany’s spine. Taeyeon kissed her lightly, lingering at their touch for several seconds when she responded. Tiffany wouldn’t let the kiss break, but took Taeyeon’s teasing breath away as a trade.

Have Every Kiss and Tell – 0.5

Sometimes it just happened. She would be fine – smiling, laughing, living and then the next day she would find herself back in the dark corners of a club, have alcohol burn her throat and let a stranger whisper utter lies in her ear, press her against the filthy walls of a restroom.

The dance floor today was suffocating. There were people on all sides of her, moving their bodies against her, their breaths hot everywhere on her exposed skin. Tiffany squeezed herself away from the crowd and stumbled out, the fresh air filling her lungs quickly. She let herself fall back against the wall.

Tiffany had done this probably a million times. There were too many times of flirting with at least a handful of people and kissing the one she really liked at the end of the night. And many times she dragged her still intoxicated body out of the club to get back home, but sometimes, though not often, she was sober and only sneaked out to wander the night until morning.

There was enough alcohol in her blood to have her wobble on her feet now, but she hadn't smiled at anyone all night and the still air outside of the bouncing club made her head somehow so clear it hurt. Could such thing exist, she didn't know, but her life flashed by her in slow motion and hot tears were already streaming down her face as she stepped inside her car.

Everything was so silent, so quiet, so empty as soon as she closed the door. It was just her, crying her eyes out behind the steering wheel and she really hated this feeling, of being nothing more than a shell of someone called Tiffany Hwang. Though the fact that she wasn't able to forget anymore, if only for a moment, scared the living hell out of her.

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Hyoyeon laid flat out on her bed, rolled around until it started squeaking and sat up to throw a pillow to Taeyeon's head. She missed.

"Shut it."

Taeyeon looked at her with a bewildered look. "What?"

"Shut. It." She threw another pillow at her, this time hitting her target with a loud sound and she in turn buried her head in her mess of sheets.

"I can't take it anymore," Hyoyeon said, her voice muffled, "You've been talking about

her for hours.”

The pillows laid scattered on the floor and Taeyeon picked them up, set them down neatly next to Hyoyeon.

“I like her,” she said, “This isn’t the first time you’ve heard me talking about someone I like.”

Hyoyeon’s head shot up and Taeyeon almost lost her balance from the shock.

“No. This isn’t simply talking.” She sat up straight and waved around with her hands. “This... you go on and on and on and on. How? You talked endlessly about her just this morning and then I saw you again in the afternoon and you rambled on again. And when I got out of the shower, during dinner, after dinner until now – fucking 2AM, you just won’t stop.”

Hyoyeon let out a long sigh and took a moment to catch her breath. “You talk way too much and I realize now how much I really hate hearing your voice all the freaking time.”

“Well, thanks,” Taeyeon muttered dryly.

She didn’t know what else to say. It wasn’t something she was aware of, but as she listened to what Hyoyeon said, she knew she was right. It has been more than a week and she hadn’t been able to shut up about Tiffany from the moment their lips touched. The more she thought about it, went back to the chillness of 4AM at an abandoned beach and remembered stars in moon-crescent eyes, the more she wanted to have it put into words, paint this feeling with colors out of this world.

It was that beautiful, she thought Tiffany was that beautiful and she knew now how poets could write pages about a pair of eyes and long soft hair and how she probably could as well. There just weren’t enough words to describe what Tiffany did to her.

“Just... You know, you annoy me,” Hyoyeon grinned, “You haven’t been like this for quite a while.”

Taeyeon looked at her quietly, nodded to herself.

“Yeah,” she agreed, “I feel really stupid to be honest.”

She took Hyoyeon’s outstretched hand and sat next to her on the bed. It made a disturbing sound as she did and she had to hold in her laugh to not ruin the mood to talk, in some way.

“Why? Doesn’t she like you?” Hyoyeon asked, rubbing her back.

She took a deep breath and hesitated to answer. Taeyeon didn’t really know, because like she knew Tiffany was amazing, probably thousands of others have noticed as well. It was hard to miss, the charms that Tiffany had.

“I think she likes a lot of people,” she said honestly.

“Damn. You’re starting to like players now?”

Taeyeon shook her head, frowned, “I was the one who kissed her, remember? But I wouldn’t be surprised if she was like this with other people.”

“Because...?” Hyoyeon asked confused.

“I told you, she’s really playful. But it makes me smile.”

“God,” Hyoyeon groaned, moving away from her, “You lovesick fool. Just go, go.” She shoved her aside. “I don’t see what you’re doing here talking with me. Go meet and worship her some more.”

“Shut up,” Taeyeon laughed and breathed through her nose. “She just gets me, somehow. She doesn’t say a thing, but I feel understood anyway.”

Hyoyeon didn’t put much effort in hiding her rolling eyes. She groaned some more and muttered incoherent words under her breath.

“What did you say?”

“You won’t get out of it if things keep on going like this.”

That, Taeyeon knew. But then, she thought, she shouldn’t have met Tiffany at all, because perhaps it was a one-way road with no exit from the very start.

*

“Tiffany!”

She heard her name being shouted from outside her car, a hand hitting her car window for what it seemed like an eternity to her. Her head hung painfully to the side and she grimaced as the ache got worse as she lifted her head up. The banging wouldn’t stop and thinking it wasn’t a dream after all, she rolled down the windows, looked at a blurry face as soon as the cold outside hit her.

“Are you out of your mind?”

Tiffany recognized that voice. It was airy, thin. The same one from campus.

“Jessica?” It was such a struggle to clear her eyes – she just had to count on her memory that she wasn’t wrong.

“Surely driving while you’re drunk is something you can do without killing anyone.”

It was definitely Jessica.

“What are you doing here?”

“Clubbing,” she said and looked carefully at Tiffany for a second. “You’ve been crying?”

Tiffany’s hands shot up to her face and she felt her cheeks still wet. She quickly dried them.

“Hey,” Jessica said, bending down to stick her head through the car window. “You don’t have to tell me anything,” she whispered, “Just don’t drive.”

They had probably shared ten sentences max when they met the last time, but Tiffany knew she was growing a liking to Jessica already. Jessica knew her place and she couldn’t be any more glad.

“Thank you,” she said sincerely.

Jessica just nodded and stood straight up again, eyeing her watch impatiently.

The cold air had considerably sobered up Tiffany and she could see Jessica’s face more clear now. She stood with her weight shifted on one foot and typed in her phone numerous times as she waited at the curb.

“You’re waiting for someone?” Tiffany asked, attempting a conversation.

Jessica looked at her and smiled, her teeth not showing. A car pulled in at that moment and Tiffany squinted at the bright headlights reflecting from her side mirrors. Jessica waved at the driver.

“She’s here,” Jessica said, turning back to Tiffany. “You can keep her for the rest of the night, though it’s not like you haven’t lately,” she grinned. “But it’s Friday – she just needs to do some groceries tomorrow.”

Tiffany turned in her seat and saw Taeyeon getting out of the car in a hurry. Suddenly she felt too ashamed to meet her – her eyes were probably red and swollen, hair and clothes reeking of alcohol and nasty cigarettes. She wanted to smile so big it hid her sad eyes, but even if it worked, Tiffany knew she couldn't hide her knees that were so weak she was about to fall for her. Damn her feelings.

"Look at you."

She looked up at the whisper and found two worried eyes, a hand stroking her hair.

"Open the door for me, I'll take you home."

Tiffany obeyed quietly as she tripped on her own feet, closing the car door behind her. Taeyeon caught her softly, bringing her hands down to her waist, steadying her.

"Where do you live?" Taeyeon asked as they took off. The car was buzzing softly and she felt instantly warm as Taeyeon brought their hands together as she waited for an answer.

"I don't want to go home tonight," she said, looking out the window quietly. Her words were probably slurred, but she didn't really care anymore.

Taeyeon turned to look at her. "Did you kiss anyone tonight? While you were drunk?" she asked quietly.

Tiffany smiled softly, "I haven't." She drew small circles on Taeyeon's hand. "Why?"

"No, I was just curious," Taeyeon whispered, "Things happen when you're drunk." She took a deep breath and turned to Tiffany quickly. "Now tell me where you live or else I'd make a wrong turn."

Tiffany pursed her lips. "Just drop me off somewhere, I really don't feel like going home."

It went quiet for a while and Tiffany closed her heavy eyes, holding Taeyeon's hand tighter. It wasn't awkward and she had wondered why sometimes, but Tiffany had let go of that thought somewhere during their first kiss. Sense was the last thing she had with her anyway.

The car came to a stop not too long after and she thought Taeyeon had found her place after all, magically, but as she opened her eyes she recognized the ocean and its waves. Taeyeon was sitting next to her, still holding her hand, smiling softly at her.

“Let’s watch the sunrise,” she said, “We always meet in the middle of the night, but never once have we watched the sunrise together. The bay is the perfect place for that.”

Taeyeon got out and walked over to her side to open the door for her. She held her tightly at her waist and Tiffany thought it was almost funny, because seemingly Taeyeon knew her knees could give up any second.

They sat down at the center of a cold concrete curb just a few meters away from the car, high above the waves and the horizon in its full view. Taeyeon took a deep breath and exhaled loudly. “Nice, isn’t it?”

Words had left Tiffany’s mouth and so she just looked at Taeyeon, her eyes staring hard and long at her. She wanted to say so much – like, thank you for taking care of me, thank you for being nice, you’re crazy for liking such a mess like me, you’re crazy and I like you. Something like that.

Taeyeon felt uneasy under her stare, she could tell, so she laid down her head on her shoulder and held her hand gently.

The sun was peeking out from the back of the ocean and she smiled at herself, liking her first shared sunrise. Taeyeon put her head on hers and after a while shifted awkwardly from where she sat. Tiffany was about to ask, but then Taeyeon lowered her head, had her face suddenly right in front of her. She pecked Tiffany’s lips softly, pulled back to smile shyly at her and then kissed her again, this time a bit longer, holding on to her hand tighter.

Taeyeon cleared her throat and straightened her back as soon as they broke the kiss and quietly let go of her hand, held it with her left hand instead and put her right arm around Tiffany’s waist.

“I know you like me,” she said dryly, “So you’re not allowed to kiss anyone else as of now.” Her eyes were staring straight ahead.

Tiffany looked at her with a lop-sided grin, but her eyes were gentle and she buried her smile in the crook of Taeyeon’s neck.

“Okay,” she said, “Okay.”

Could've Beens and Will Be's – 0.6

“Why did you drink so much?”

The air was anything but cold. Dawn had broke out long ago and even with her back pressed against her seat, Taeyeon felt like she couldn't stay still, have her body touch the ground anymore. Maybe it was the lack of sleep, because her head felt oddly light right now, like it could float away like a lost balloon. And just as she thought it could, it slammed back so hard her whole body ached. She wondered how Tiffany felt with the alcohol still hanging onto her breath.

Tiffany sighed heavily, closing her eyes at the sun already out. She could still taste Taeyeon's lip gloss on the corners of her mouth and she occasionally licks them to not forget how Taeyeon's lips felt like. It had submitted her to something she wasn't even sure of, but it wasn't such a terrifying thought to have Taeyeon be the last person to kiss her.

“I like a drink or twelve,” Tiffany answered playfully.

She turned back to look at Taeyeon, but she looked at her so sadly Tiffany almost wanted to tell the truth and not joke around for once. She held her wrist and stroke it lovingly with her fingers, trailing up and down so slowly that it caused goosebumps on Taeyeon's skin. It was her way of saying sorry.

The Tiffany she saw in front of the club had disappeared in air and Taeyeon watched the hairs on her arm react to her touches. Tiffany was back to the person she first laid eyes on, with the perfect hair and charming laugh and mesmerizing smile. Except that Tiffany didn't have perfect hair right now, Taeyeon found it ironic to see how perfect she was anyway. She chuckled and grabbed Tiffany's stroking hand to give it a kiss. Tiffany just looked at her.

“You can cry if you want.” She moved the hairs from Tiffany's eyes. “You can tell me why after that and then maybe it feels better.”

She smiled when Tiffany kept staring at her. “Maybe I'd understand.”

Tiffany's heart did jumps and she just hoped Taeyeon wouldn't ever.

People hurt in different ways, but it would still be hurt and Tiffany hoped with all her heart that no one could ever understand the bitter and dark world you were left in when people leave you behind. Tiffany thought of Jennifer when she rode the bike for the first time, when she fell off of it, when she told her about her first love and how at the very

end gave up her life because of her last one.

No one should ever understand how it felt being the one left behind, because, really, Tiffany still couldn't figure out why her only family wanted to leave her. It was a feeling that tore her apart and Tiffany really hoped that Taeyeon didn't feel what she felt.

"It's nothing," she smiled. It's nothing, she told herself.

"I told you about my parents, right?" Taeyeon smiled sadly at her, "They didn't want me anymore. Even if I wouldn't understand what you're going through, I'd still understand the pain."

She looked at Taeyeon and wanted to kiss that smile. Perhaps she could give her that smile as they locked lips, perhaps she could just teach her how to be happy when you were left on your own. Tiffany felt useless for still having all these feelings while Taeyeon had practically went through the same thing but ended up with a smile.

"Yeah. Maybe," she nodded, eyes casted down, already brimming with tears. She took a deep breath and thought that this moment would be the last time. She would bare her thoughts and then there was no turning back, because even if she hated it, her heart was probably steering Taeyeon's way anyway. She took a deep breath again and felt like the world spun, mocking her misery.

"I miss her," she told Taeyeon, her eyes falling at the faltering of her own smile, "I miss my little sister."

"Why?" Taeyeon asked simply, but Tiffany's chin quivered instantly, her sobs coming out unexpectedly.

The space between them made it hard for Taeyeon to reach out to her, but she beckoned Tiffany to move closer anyway and somehow Tiffany really did – her legs tangled between the seats, her whole body buzzing warmth from crying, still. She just needed someone and when Tiffany felt like she needed something, she would reach out to it no matter what.

She snuggled on Taeyeon's lap and Taeyeon had her arm around her, pressed her against her own warm body and put her other arm around her legs, tugging her closer. Tiffany felt like a baby, still crying and Taeyeon rocking back and forth, whispered lightly against her skin to soothe her.

"Where's your little sister?" Taeyeon asked again softly. She felt her neck getting wet from Tiffany's tears and all she really wanted to do was get into her brain and know what was hurting her. Taeyeon would fight off every painful memory and put them far,

far back in her mind, so she wouldn't cry anymore when thinking of them.

"She's gone."

The words fell into sobs and Taeyeon held her tighter, felt like holding her forever and kissed her temple. She let Tiffany bury herself in her, because maybe, just maybe, they could mold their broken hearts together and make it one.

*

She watched Tiffany's body rise and fall, the sun hanging lowly in the sky and its rays warmed her skin. Tiffany shifted and her body felt numb from her weight, but then Tiffany held her closer in her sleep and Taeyeon wondered if there would be repeats of this night, like all the other nights. Because if there weren't, she would want time to stop right here.

She had kissed a girl for the first time when she was fifteen. It was strange and confusing, but it felt right enough to keep kissing her until one day she decided Taeyeon wasn't enough anymore.

It was a heartbreak that she would remember, maybe forever, because even after the kisses had dried, after their words of forever had died down, Taeyeon could still feel the ghosts of endless whispers following her, shadows of pointed fingers itching her mind.

They stopped haunting her when she spent time with that cute guy down the street and everything disappeared altogether as she pressed her lips against him. Taeyeon knew she couldn't be doing this for the rest of her life, but it stopped every doubt everyone had in her and it made her feel like she could fit neatly in her parents' embrace again. Everything fell when she followed her heart anyways.

Tiffany's hair tickled her and everything was so right, yet everything they were really wasn't. They were merely a presence in this world, carrying burdens that no one wanted, crying tears no one noticed. Taeyeon closed her eyes at the thought of her parents, of Tiffany's sister and that they honestly only had themselves in this world. There were her friends, but the heaviness in her heart couldn't be felt by anyone and they wouldn't ever want to either – it was a bad, ugly and nasty feeling and getting rid of it forced her to get rid a part of herself. It was sad and painful, but so was she and so was Tiffany probably, most likely. They honestly only had each other.

The breeze blowing lightly through the window made her feel drowsy, content and she shifted closer to Tiffany's warm body, nestled her head in her neck and thought to herself that it would be really great if she could wake up to see her smile.

*

The sun hit her eyes all of the sudden and she opened them, feeling disoriented at the strange place she just woke up at. Granted, this wasn't the first time, but it had been the first time for her to feel so well rested, even as the headache she just became aware of made it hard for her to even think.

The room was all white, pictures here and there on the walls and a big desk in the corner. Clothes were scattered almost everywhere and through her blurry eyes Tiffany could see the thin curtains moving with the wind. It made her smile somehow and once she cleared her eyes from sleep, she found Taeyeon next to her with a small pout, eyes closed and her breath even. The room suddenly seemed very warm. It was a strange sort of pride that she felt, because years of longing for something that was never there could result into this something that maybe could be a part of what she wanted.

Tiffany shifted and moved her face close to Taeyeon's. She found her stir awake in the most beautiful way – her eyelids trembled lightly and her eyebrows drew a frown that drew Tiffany closer.

It was something that couldn't be helped – Taeyeon would have to get used to this somehow, so Tiffany kissed the tip of her nose, let her breath warm Taeyeon's lips before kissing them gently, waking her up fully. Tiffany smiled at her purr as she stretched herself and she kissed her again, feeling her smile this time.

"Good morning to you too," Taeyeon whispered, words coated in sleep.

"Good afternoon," she smiled, "Slept well?"

Taeyeon's eyes were still closed, but the corners of her lips curved up anyway and she let out an amusing scoff.

"My back hurt, so I'm happy to be back in my soft, soft bed." She moved her arm up and down the sheets, stroking the bed happily with a grin on her face.

The wind blew again, softly, and Tiffany hid her lightly shivering body between the sheets.

They fell silent and Tiffany suddenly felt so sad watching Taeyeon snuggle closer and kiss the side of her neck. The sadness crept in at times she least expected – when she was at what she thought was already her saddest, when she watched the stars at night, cleared the dinner table after dinner. Today it settled with an honest moment, Taeyeon playing with her fingers with her eyes closed and smiling to herself occasionally.

This, too, would not last Tiffany thought and she took a deep and shaky breath at the realization that perhaps she had to settle with the fact that nobody would ever stay in her life. That this girl, too, would get to know her, realize the heaviness of the thousands of kisses she shared with others and walk away like nothing happened.

This, too, would not last, Tiffany knew.

"Thank you for last night," she said and gave a sincere smile.

Taeyeon smiled back and noticed her watery eyes as she looked at her. She looked down at their hands and her smile grew smaller.

"You can talk to me," she said softly, "You look really sad right now."

A nervous laugh escaped Tiffany's mouth and she pursed her lips, eyes growing softer.

"I really like you."

The sudden confession didn't surprised Taeyeon, but somehow it felt really good to hear. And she wondered if baring her heart had anything to do with it, that perhaps a comforting soul next to her made her feel coated with affection. Maybe Tiffany mistook it for a growing liking that came from herself. Taeyeon looked at her and every doubt vanished when her eyes fell on hers.

"I'm no good, but somehow I really like you," Tiffany smiled sadly at her, "That's not okay, is it?"

Taeyeon laid still in her place and looked down at their joint hands, noticed the chipped nails and the broken lines going through the paint. Perhaps Tiffany, just like her, had more scars than she would want admit.

"I don't think it's okay," Tiffany continued, eyes on the swaying trees outside.

"But I want to be with you," she said quietly. The silence around Taeyeon made her nervous and she found it hard to read her, her skin soft and her hand neatly in hers. Tiffany continued when Taeyeon thumbed the back of her hand.

"I want us to be together. Like we're lovers, meant to be and even if we're not, maybe we can be okay then. I want to be okay." She looked down where there was no longer space between them and dared to look at Taeyeon again after a while.

"Is that okay with you? Being with someone like me?"

Taeyeon's lips moved slightly and she held her hand tighter, about to speak, but Tiffany wouldn't wait and kissed her hungrily like it would be their last kiss. Maybe it was, so she kissed her harder, tugged her lips with an aggression she had held inside the moment they met and it wore her out, but it wasn't possible to stop. When Taeyeon kissed her back with the same intensity, Tiffany took it as her answer, took the words of a daring promise from the tip of Taeyeon's tongue and swallowed them whole into her whole being.

This wouldn't last forever, Tiffany thought, but she prayed that God would prove her wrong even if she didn't believe in him anymore.

“So what are you guys?”

Jessica flipped through the pages of her textbook while looking at Taeyeon, completely missing the important revising notes she had marked. Taeyeon looked back and she smiled when Jessica’s look became a glare. Some dark clouds had hidden away the full sun and it got colder once the rays halted in their way to them. Taeyeon eyed her unfinished assignment and thought that maybe there were too many times that she gave up halfway.

“I don’t know,” she said. Her textbooks were scattered on the floor and she tried to do the assignment with the one in her lap. She scratched her nose. “I guess I don’t mind not having to label this.”

The lack of sleep was taking its toll on her now and Taeyeon held her head, gently rubbing her temples in an attempt to sooth the upcoming headache. They could be anything and they would still be so damn broken.

“So you’re friend with benefits.” Jessica said casually and Taeyeon almost frowned at the thought of it.

“That’s one thing I don’t want.”

Jessica’s eyes softened. “You know, I met that girl twice and I think she’s good for you.”

Her head ached a bit hurt more and she looked at Jessica with an incredulous look. She wondered what prompted Jessica to tell her that. “But?”

“You two are good together. Just know that only that is not enough sometimes.” The look on Jessica’s face was gentle.

“You think I’ll end up hurt?”

Truthfully, there was no way she wouldn’t get hurt. She had hurt, albeit faintly, when she first met Tiffany and there was no stopping to it. The more Taeyeon wanted to turn away, the more it teased her mind. When they first shared still water as a memory, when they first kissed, when she saw Tiffany with blood-shot eyes and chapped lips, drunk from the heaviness of her own heart – there wasn’t a moment she didn’t hurt. But even so, the fact that she felt something so greatly, in full colors, at its rawest, made her believe the more that this was something really beautiful.

Her headache grew away slowly and she looked at Jessica. Jessica. Her friend. The one who helped decorate her apartment, made terrible food to feed her and cried with her when she wanted to quit life. Jessica – Taeyeon wanted to be happy, if only just for her.

“Tiffany has luggage,” Jessica gently stroke her hair, dismissing the look Taeyeon gave her, “Perhaps that’s a good thing, because you’re not clean from the past either.”

“I’m not,” Taeyeon swallowed.

“Maybe it’s just an infatuation, a little crush,” she whispered, “But maybe you’re supposed to meet and feel all the things that you’re feeling now.”

Taeyeon chuckled and fiddled with the upper left corner of her book. “Thank you,” she said softly.

The doorbell rang at that moment and Jessica stood up from her place, nudging Taeyeon on her way to the front door.

“She’s here already,” and Taeyeon couldn’t suppress a grin. “Idiot,” Jessica muttered.

*

The girl in front of her was dressed in a simple over-sized white dress shirt and fitted jeans. Hair parted to one side – she wore a smile that was cautious, but sincere and pretty nonetheless and Jessica wondered what more she was, to have Taeyeon smile so brightly every time they met.

“Hi,” she smiled, “Come in, Taeyeon’s in her room.”

Tiffany walked passed Jessica, her eyes taking in the new sight and they roamed around the apartment. She nodded, impressed with the neatness.

“I didn’t know you two were living together,” she said, turning to Jessica.

“We don’t,” Jessica walked to the open kitchen, “I just come by very often.” She opened the fridge and shifted the weight between her feet. “You want anything to drink? Soda, coke, milk, chocolate milk, you name it.”

“Just a glass of water,” Tiffany smiled and Jessica nodded, poured her a glass from the tap. She grabbed her bag from the counter and watched Tiffany balance her drink with two books in one hand and a small plastic bag in the other.

Tiffany was pretty and basically everything Taeyeon told her she was. Her hair was

perfect, eyes round and twinkling and she knew Tiffany grew uncomfortable with the way she was looking at her right now. She smiled stiffly and tapped her fingers on the counter, about to leave.

"I honestly thought you were no good when we first met."

Tiffany's eyes darted her way and she gave her a more relaxed smile. "But seems like you're one of us."

What that exactly meant, Tiffany didn't know. But it gave her a reassuring feeling – that she wasn't alone, whatever feeling she had left to feel.

"Go on," Jessica nodded her head to Taeyeon's bedroom door, "I'll leave you guys to have some time together."

*

"Hi."

Taeyeon turned around to meet a nervous smile and she chuckled, enjoying the rare sight of it. Tiffany was fiddling with the hem of her shirt and she couldn't help but smile.

"Hi," she said.

Tiffany came closer, slowly with each step slightly hesitant. The way to Taeyeon was a mere three meters, but she never did this – she never kissed and longed and had her heart beat fast. But when she did, it felt so good she had to come back.

Her mind went back to the time when it first started, but somehow she couldn't pinpoint the moment she recognized the swelling of her heart. Had her heart ever acted this way, was a question she had wondered about for the last few weeks. She took a final step and the girl in front of her was in reach.

Taeyeon sat on the edge of her bed and she closed her books and set her pile of papers aside. With a small hop, Tiffany landed on the bed, sitting closely next to her. Taeyeon chuckled.

"Here, let me get that for you," she said and took the glass of water from Tiffany's hand to put it down on her desk. She reached out for her books and put them on the floor.

"Let's lie down for a little bit, I'm tired." She stretched her body and flew her arms to her sides, leaving no space for Tiffany on the bed.

She stuck out her tongue when Tiffany glared at her and motioned Tiffany to lie down next to her anyway – “You could lie in my arms,” she said cheekily.

Tiffany did as she was told, though holding in her laughter, and Taeyeon wrapped her arms and legs around her as soon as she put her head down on her arm. She kissed Tiffany’s collarbone and got even closer, her face buried in soft hair.

“You should finish your assignment,” Tiffany mumbled lazily.

Taeyeon moved to kiss her forehead instead and trailed down to her nose and cheeks, letting her lips rest lightly on Tiffany’s skin. She closed her eyes.

“Didn’t you miss me?”

Tiffany let out a hearty giggle and twirled Taeyeon’s hair slowly around her finger. “Hmm.”

“You didn’t?”

It made Tiffany chuckle. “What if I didn’t?”

Taeyeon’s eyes opened slowly and Tiffany could feel her eyelashes brush against her skin. It made her lose her smirk and just look at Taeyeon for the longest time.

Taeyeon lifted herself up and looked down to study Tiffany better. The last couple of weeks had given her heart rest, though their minds and everything that they were was so chaotic she couldn’t wrap her mind around it. It was strange and it unsettled her – what were they to make her feel like this?

“I did actually,” Tiffany whispered, before Taeyeon could say anything at all, “I kind of missed you.”

“You really did?” Taeyeon smiled. She stroke Tiffany’s cheek lightly and nuzzled in the warmth of her neck.

“No.”

She frowned at the flat reply and looked at Tiffany to see a sly smirk. “You’re mean.”

“I’m being honest,” Tiffany giggled. She let out a long sigh. “I had so much fun playing on the beach. Just laying there, watching the stars with someone.”

She dismissed Taeyeon’s glare with a playful smile, “You should do that sometime. You

know, just stay there with someone you can really connect with till morning and enjoy their company.”

Taeyeon retracted her arms and legs and turned her back to Tiffany, crossing her arms. “Seems like you had fun. With that *someone*.”

“I did,” Tiffany laughed. She put her chin on Taeyeon’s shoulder when she didn’t react and tugged on her sleeve. “Is my Taeyeon mad?” she asked in a small voice.

“No, no. Just go and have fun.” Taeyeon pulled herself up and threw her legs off the bed. “Not missing me and all,” she added.

She was about to get up, though not really, but her body was weighted down by an arm around her waist. She felt Tiffany squirm beside her and with slight difficulty pull her head from under Taeyeon’s arm, her head resting awkwardly on Taeyeon’s right leg.

“Peek-a-boo,” Tiffany smiled.

“What are you doing?” Taeyeon laughed as she looked down on her. Tiffany’s arm was still around her waist and the position they were in was odd, but it felt right – comfortable, and she smiled down softly at her, stroking her messy hair that was splayed across her lap.

“I don’t want you to go,” Tiffany pouted, though her eyes had a flicker of teasing in them, if only just for a second.

“I thought you didn’t miss me,” Taeyeon said, challenging Tiffany with a raise of her eyebrows, “Now why should I stay if you’re already having the time of your life?”

She watched Tiffany bite her lips, deep in thought and after a moment that flicker grew more evident.

“Because you missed *me*,” she said with confidence and her eyes never shone so brightly before.

The words were probably meant playfully, but they were honestly nothing but the truth and Taeyeon realized that now, with Tiffany’s hand stroking her back and as she looked at that smirk on her face that she hadn’t lost. A mere few days of not seeing her could make Taeyeon feel like she was in love. And maybe, very likely so, this feeling would persist even if Tiffany stayed by her side for every next second her life had.

Suddenly the hand on her back was gone and Tiffany crawled to sit up, facing her. Tiffany balanced herself on the soft bed, leaning, putting a hand on the mattress next to

Taeyeon's side. She was so close, Taeyeon could kiss her with a sway of her head.

"I like this feeling," Tiffany said gently. She casted her eyes down and smiled a sad smile, "It's been a while since I've been missed by someone. Someone I honestly really like."

She looked back up to Taeyeon. They stared at each other for so long and just when Taeyeon thought it wasn't possible anymore to look away, Tiffany closed her eyes and dropped her head on Taeyeon's shoulder.

"I missed you," Taeyeon said finally, just above a whisper.

Tiffany's breath teased the delicate skin of her neck as she chuckled and Tiffany slowly pulled away until their eyes met again.

"Taeyeon," she called.

"What is it?" Taeyeon kissed her nose.

Tiffany smiled, but called again, this time softer, slower. "Taeyeon."

"Hmm." Taeyeon smiled, but Tiffany didn't waver from her stare and said her name again.

"Tae. Yeon. My Taeyeon."

"What's with you?" Taeyeon chuckled and kissed her cheek. Tiffany was too cute.

She heard her sigh and smack her lips. Tiffany was nervous and she didn't know why.

"Taeyeon," Tiffany said again and she looked down to Taeyeon's hand resting on her lap. She brought it to her lips and gave it a soft kiss, before letting it drop softly between them. Her hands were getting sweaty, it made Taeyeon feel worried, but then Tiffany held her pinky gently between her own fingers and she could smile again.

"Let's be together," Tiffany whispered, gently brushing her thumb over Taeyeon's pinky.

The numerous times that Taeyeon had thought about them – when she walked on campus, made herself a sandwich, even as she was with Tiffany, Taeyeon would wonder what they were. But then this was what they were going to be – together.

Taeyeon couldn't hide her smile and only wanted Tiffany closer. She laughed through her nose and snaked one arm around Tiffany's waist, curling her pinky tighter around Tiffany's fingers.

“Yeah,” she smiled and playfully nudge Tiffany’s nose with hers, “We’ll be okay together.”

She thought back to the assignment on her desk, the deadline she wouldn’t catch. She looked down at their joint hands, their mess of fingers and feelings and Taeyeon hoped, truly hoped, that this would be something she would see all the way through.

Black and White and Now, 0.8

Hyoyeon's eyes almost popped out of their sockets and she flung her arms around in panic, trying to close the door as soon as possible. She cursed herself for not checking the bathroom door.

Hyoyeon exhaled in relief and brought her hand to her chest, calming herself down. She pulled out several towels from the closet and went back to the bathroom, Tiffany still standing there and staring at her.

"Here." Hyoyeon finally threw her the towel she had in her hand and Tiffany covered herself leisurely. In the corners of her eyes she could see Tiffany grinning. She tore her eyes away, turned her back to her and walked off briskly.

Tiffany walked to Taeyeon's room, her hair damp, shoulders still slightly wet. She shut the door with such great force it startled Taeyeon, who was reading a book on her bed.

"Hey, gorgeous," Taeyeon smiled.

"You didn't shower with me," she said bluntly, "And now Hyoyeon saw me naked."

"She did?" Taeyeon asked softly, "How did that happen?"

Taeyeon's reaction made her speak boldly. "I didn't lock the bathroom door."

"Because?"

"I thought you could join me or something." She was still standing in front of Taeyeon, but now she was looked at with an accusing eye and it made her smile, honestly.

"I didn't know Hyoyeon was home," she defended herself, laughing lightly at the situation, "She wasn't here last night."

"She sometimes comes home in the morning," Taeyeon said, smiling amusedly at a slightly flustered Tiffany. "Come here." She held her arms open.

Tiffany quietly sat on her lap, resting her head on Taeyeon's and Taeyeon immediately had her arms around her. The towel was coming loose and her own, still damp, hair was making Taeyeon's slightly wet, too. She lifted her head when she heard Taeyeon sigh deeply.

"It's nothing," Tiffany said, looking down at her. "If it's any help, Yuri's seen me naked all

the time, too.”

“That is not any help,” Taeyeon frowned.

“Oh.” Tiffany pursed her lips, showing a sign of guilt, but her devious smile appeared a second later. Taeyeon really hated that smile and she felt Tiffany softly kissing her bare shoulder, purring against her skin – she really hated it.

“Tiff,” she murmured, craning her neck to get closer to Tiffany’s breath. Not now, I’m not in the mood, you just showered, she wanted to say. But she felt its warmth and it drew her face closer and closer, until all the warmth she felt was Tiffany. They kissed softly, slowly and Taeyeon knew she wouldn’t be uttering her words of rejection today.

She laid her down on the bed and the towel loosened, lost its grip on Tiffany’s body and slid down in a flowing motion – Taeyeon’s eyes following every inch.

Tiffany’s body shook from the sudden cold and she reached out to hold Taeyeon closer, have the sheer layer of warmth on her skin – just enough so she could relax and look into the eyes that held so many things. Taeyeon’s lips crashed down on her fast and she let out a small moan when her hands roamed her naked skin.

This was so dangerous, because they had done this so many times and there wasn’t a time Tiffany ever thought she would get enough of her. It might never be enough and the amount of self control she had was close to nothing, not with Taeyeon. Maybe Taeyeon was just something no one could ever get enough of, she concluded.

She clutched Taeyeon’s shirt and slowly let go, finding her way down to her back, sliding her hands underneath her shirt. She was about to get lost in her when the door opened with a loud noise and Hyoyeon stood there with her phone in hand. She was seemingly unfazed as she witnessed Tiffany cover herself with the comforters and Taeyeon getting off of her within a second.

“I need to talk to you,” Hyoyeon said and it seemed like Taeyeon knew why, because she followed her without missing a beat and closed the door behind her without looking back.

*

“What does he want?”

“I don’t know,” Hyoyeon sighed, “He said he wanted to talk to you.”

Taeyeon scoffed and tossed the phone in her palm on Hyoyeon’s bed.

"Maybe you should talk to him, see what he wants to say," Hyoyeon said, carefully shifting closer to her. "You miss him, don't you?"

Taeyeon did miss her dad. She hadn't wanted to leave – there were memories she treasured, smiles she loved and people she didn't want to lose. It was sometimes suffocating, the way he looked at her, like she had symptoms of a nasty disease and sometimes he didn't and then she felt so happy she could forget every tear he ever made her shed. Taeyeon missed him so much, she would run right back into his arms like nothing happened.

"Maybe," she said and watched the lifeless phone come to life, ringing.

*

"Taeyeon's been acting weird lately," Tiffany said. She rolled the dice, picked a card and set the timer. "We don't go out as often."

The Lego pieces she put together resembled a crooked staircase more than the Tower of Pisa on the card. She admired her work with a light grin.

She looked out the window – it was evening, but summer was approaching and they laid in a nice bath of warm air with the window open and the city alive and loud in the background of their home. They had spent lesser time with each other the past few months. Yuri didn't seem to mind, but Tiffany did somehow. A sense of guilt ate her up at times as she woke up in bed with Taeyeon next to her, and not with Yuri like she used to. Now, they were playing a childish Lego board game, but Tiffany felt happier than ever. She felt like she had been away too long from her family and now she came back, only to be showered with a love that needed nothing but a moment like this.

"Maybe she just needs some alone time," Yuri said. Calmly at first, but she slammed the table in excitement a second later when Tiffany presented her her piece of art, "A snake! No, rocket... I know, a couch!"

"I kind of know what it's about, but I want her to tell me. And seriously, a couch?"

"More correctly – a sofa," Yuri grinned. "She doesn't want to worry you."

Tiffany shook her head, but her frown smoothened out when she checked the timer. "Time's up, I win the game."

"This game is stupid," Yuri mumbled and kicked the Lego pieces like a five-year-old. She turned to Tiffany with a small pout.

“Sleep with me tonight.”

“Oh, seductive,” Tiffany grinned and pushed Yuri’s face away with a playful nudge on her head. “Say it in French.”

“Voulez-vous coucher avec moi.”

“Very nice,” Tiffany laughed and shrugged, “Why not.”

Yuri straightened up, “That was easy.”

“Your skills aren’t that good,” Tiffany scowled, “I happen to like you.”

“I know,” Yuri’s eyes got softer. “I like you, too.”

*

There was a long silence before Tiffany called her name softly. “Yuri.”

“Yeah.”

She hesitated, but Yuri was important, this was important and then the words dropped from her lips. “What do you think of Taeyeon?”

Yuri didn’t say anything and remained still when Tiffany turned to her side, facing her. She sighed after Tiffany tugged her shirt and she closed her eyes tiredly.

“What is it that you actually want to ask?”

Tiffany blinked and she sensed Yuri being aloof. It didn’t feel right and it kind of terrified her, because Yuri was implying something and that something made her feel dizzy.

“What do you mean?” Tiffany finally asked.

“You’re not actually asking me that question.”

“So?”

“You’re happy, so I’m happy.”

“That’s not what I want to hear,” Tiffany said. She searched Yuri’s eyes and found that same tiredness again. It frustrated her, because Yuri knew her too well and forced her to

lay everything out in the open like that. She couldn't – out in the open, her feeling would be too obvious and nothing good would come out of it.

"What do you, honestly, think of her?" she asked again, this time more sternly.

Yuri met her eyes and she knew that whatever she was going to say next would hurt her. But it scared her more that the words were going to be the truth, because the truth never was anything good.

"Don't get your hopes up."

Tiffany frowned lightly, but she felt tears welching up and she hated this so fucking much.

"Because she'll leave me?"

Yuri held her closer and rested her cheek on her head. It ate her up, gnawed at her from the inside until it tore holes in her skin, exposed fresh flesh to the broad daylight. But it had to be done, the words had to be said, Tiffany had to be brought back to reality. She was her family and it was her job to protect her. They were each other's only family.

"I don't know if she will," she said, stroking Tiffany's cheeks, "But I don't want you to get hurt, believing naively she'd stay."

Tiffany shifted and buried her face in Yuri's neck, her soft curtain of hair. It had always shielded her from everything, but she wondered why she was still so afraid now.

The trees outside were swaying lightly and it reminded her of their promise and when she did, she realized she remembered countless of other promises, too. Not one was kept and maybe it was time, Tiffany thought, to not hope anymore. Because most likely, without a doubt, Taeyeon would get enough of her, even if she would never get enough of Taeyeon.

"Do you think we'd ever find someone?" she asked softly. She felt Yuri's body shake slightly, chuckling at her question. Perhaps finding it childish, foolish, stupid – like she didn't know the answer.

"You found your someone, didn't you?" Yuri answered, a very slight hint of mock in her voice, but Tiffany knew it wasn't like that.

"Someone who'd stay with us, you know?" And when she heard her own words, she chuckled bitterly, too. What was there left to stay for? They were twenty years old – babies, kids, who had taken their first few walks in this world, cried at the unfairness of

it and cursed their own self-made smog of hope. People didn't stay, did they? Not when people died and they died a little, too. Not when people left and they were left behind. Tiffany suddenly remembered how cruel this world was to them.

"No one has ever stayed with me," Yuri said casually, "Not even mom. So I'm okay, I'm used to it."

"Does that mean you don't hurt anymore?" Tiffany asked, lifting her head to look at her.

Tiffany was so much like a naïve little sister then. She was still too hopeful for this world – Tiffany still saw the stars in the sky, the green of the trees, still smiled at home-made food and played in the rain like she was a kid.

Yuri thought it was like she was ten and asked her about her first kiss curiously, innocently, naively. Her heart went up to her throat and she swallowed hard to force the tears down.

"I haven't lately," she said and saw Tiffany nod to herself. Yuri breathed out shakily and smiled weakly at her, reassuring her.

Tiffany smiled back, but it didn't last long. As she laid her head back down, her sad eyes returned.

"Her dad hates me," Tiffany whispered against soft skin. "Because I'm a girl and I happen to fall in love with his daughter."

"Because you're a girl?"

"Yeah," Tiffany whispered, "He stared at me like he could bore holes through my heart that way."

Yuri kissed her temple softly and drew circles on her arm to calm her. "You met him?"

"We happened to meet when we went for groceries. Taeyeon was really sad afterwards."

"Were you?"

Yuri took her silence as a minute for contemplation, but then she spoke and it hit Yuri harder than it should have had.

"I was, too. Because he bored holes in my heart."

Passed The Rain Station, 0.9

Taeyeon had walked the street in front of her most likely a million times. To school, to the supermarket five minute away, to her friends and back to home. She could recognize every sound – the birds chirping halfway, grasshoppers nearby the park and the kids always playing outside at the end of the street.

Rain had started to fall and she moved faster, her shoes kicking the light dirt on the pavements. She breathed in deeply, the clean air giving her confidence.

She was almost there, the chirping birds growing faint behind her and her heart sped up, made her excited and maybe she shouldn't have been but she just was. She was going to see her family again.

There was a sound beside her, not too far away and she turned her head while walking, meeting eyes with a woman just across the street.

She bowed lightly, recognizing her to be one of her mom's many friends and the woman stayed still, shifting uncomfortable away from her and walked on like nothing happened. Taeyeon drew a frown and watched the woman walk away slowly, but then she turned around again and even with the distance between them, Taeyeon could feel her whole body shiver from the eyes roaming every inch of her body. It was like she just stepped out from it and stood aside the woman, tracing every part she looked at and wondered what there was to find.

A low voice ran through the street and she turned to its owner, an older man walking briskly to the woman. He whispered something in her ear, eyeing Taeyeon in the process and took, seemingly, his wife by the arm and almost dragged her away. Away from her, and then everything fell in place.

The rain wouldn't stop and her tears wouldn't either. Just as her heart was knitting skin on her scars, it got torn mercilessly with the realization that maybe she wasn't completely accepting of herself after all, minding what people thought of her more than she should have.

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His eyes were fixed on his book as she approached him. The wooden floor hadn't changed and the hallway still stretched far into the open kitchen – dishes neatly ordered and not a speck of dust was to detect. It felt less like her home this time around and Taeyeon was kind of scared to know what that meant.

"You're here," he said impassive as her shadow covered half of his book. He smiled to himself, turning his chair to face her. A few drops of rain still hung onto her hair, but it had grown much longer compared to the last time he saw her, eyes lightly red and she wore a smile much brighter, more hopeful, but really sad as well.

"Dad," she smiled. She stretched her hand across his desk and wanted to put her hand on his, but then he stood up and her hand hung still in the air. She watched his steps, big and confident, and he was in front of her a moment later – eyes droopy and a loud sigh from his mouth as he looked down at her.

"Dad?" she tried again and the way he looked at her made her want to cry, even more.

He asked her quietly, almost like whispering a secret.

"How long have you been dating," and his face scrunched up, "that girl?"

That girl. That girl was Tiffany, Taeyeon thought.

"Four and a half months," she answered, growing to be more curt as he grimaced with every word.

She saw him bite on the inside of his cheek, probably biting back his scoff. "Sounds like your love is so strong it can move mountains."

She shut her eyes and dropped her head at his remark, unable to hide her tears as they fell from her cheeks.

"I really love her, dad. I think we'll be really happy together." She looked at him as she said these words and somehow flashes of everything made her head heavy – she remembered the stares from those strangers and the tears her mother shed and probably in how much pain her dad was now and then things just stopped.

The world spun slower, she began to think and she began to doubt whether this was something she could handle for the rest of her life. Could she love Tiffany with everything she had and not mind the world at all, for years and years on. Could she ignore her mother's sad face and everything the man in front of her wanted for her?

She cried more and fell into her father's arms, his hand rubbing her shoulders lightly.

"I love you," he said. And it sounded so sincere, so honest that she just nodded against his chest and sobbed until her cries filled the room.

"I want you to be happy," he said and he pushed her by the shoulders to look her in the

eyes. "But you can't ever be fully, truly, one hundred percent happy, loving a girl."

Taeyeon opened her mouth to speak, to protest – yes, she could. But what did she know about this world? She had lost a love, almost a family and was running on an empty mindset, an empty stomach. She wondered if life only got harder to live, because she couldn't remember being this devastated not being able to love. Maybe she had never truly loved anyone and maybe that was her biggest flaw.

Her father noticed her sighing and shook his head.

"I'm telling you. You can't, sweetie. You just can't."

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"You've been going out a lot these days."

Tiffany bit her sushi. "I have?"

"Yeah," Taeyeon nodded, putting down her chopsticks. "Is there something wrong?"

Tiffany swallowed her food and cleared her voice.

"I think that's something I have to ask you," she said, slowly putting her hand on Taeyeon's and stroking it gently with her thumb. "Just tell me."

Taeyeon looked up at Tiffany, looked up at the lights behind her and the people talking, waiters serving, city alive and she found them to be so much like a happy couple – together, just like almost everyone else at the restaurant. She shook her head a little, but couldn't drop her father's words from her mind.

"Is it about your father?" Tiffany asked carefully, worried.

Her head ached so much at Tiffany's question and she tried to smile weakly at her, wanting her to understand and just love her a little bit more, even if she was such a bad girlfriend. She needed Tiffany to be there, even as her own feelings were wavering, because she needed her to want this as much as that she did.

"I'm scared, Tiffany," she confessed and the tears spilled all over her lover's name, dripping from it like it needed to have that coat of sadness and pain she felt to have her understand how much she wanted them.

Tiffany looked at her then and it was a look she had never seen her give before, with her eyes big, slightly droopy and just so beautiful. And then she spoke and her words rang

through the chambers of Taeyeon's heart, bouncing off the walls hitting every little corner there was. She wanted Tiffany to play with the emotions she was feeling then over and over and over again.

"I love you."

Tiffany looked around the restaurant, feeling embarrassed. "I wanted to say that in a more secluded place." Her cheeks were growing more pink than usual and she looked down quickly, but couldn't hide the sad smile on her lips.

Taeyeon scooted her chair closer to her and when Tiffany looked up again, Taeyeon was no longer sitting across from her. She was right next to her and yeah, she thought, it was so much better.

Nobody seemed to notice as Taeyeon was practically on Tiffany's seat. Her hand drew nothings on Tiffany's back as she slipped her hand underneath her shirt and all she wanted to do was kiss her, have her skin touch hers and just feel her, let her know she loved her, too. Tiffany sighed when Taeyeon buried her face in her neck, kissing it lightly. She responded by moving her head down and kissed Taeyeon's temple, brushing her nose lightly against her cheek.

This was Tiffany's way of saying she was scared, too. Terrified even, as they loved each other. And suddenly her father's words didn't prick her as badly anymore and she sighed into Tiffany's hair, thanking her silently, because this was what Tiffany could do to her.

"I'm sorry," Taeyeon said softly then and Tiffany stayed calm, eating her sushi again slowly.

"For what?"

People around them started to stare and Taeyeon breathed in deeply, breathed in Tiffany's smell and she just wanted to be home, under the covers with her. She pulled away and rested her arm on the table, but kept one hand still on Tiffany's back. She didn't know what would happen if she'd let go.

"Did you ever think this is too hard? What we're going through? What we'll have to go through?"

"It's tiring, too," Tiffany answered, sipping her drink now.

"Yeah." Taeyeon looked down on the hand on her lap. "I was really close to breaking up with you back at home," she said. And every word was so honest, she was afraid it would push Tiffany away. But she looked at her and Tiffany just had her head down, focusing

on her food.

“Why don’t you say something?” she asked after a while, rubbing Tiffany’s back slowly now.

Tiffany shrugged and turned to smile at her. She had those sad eyes again and Taeyeon felt horrible, because it was her who caused it.

“I knew you would,” Tiffany said.

Her nonchalance made Taeyeon frown and then her eyes brimmed with tears. Guilt filled her body throughout and she closed her eyes shut, because there was truth in Tiffany’s words – Taeyeon had been tossing and turning in her bed for weeks, thinking about their future and there was that one moment when she really believed they didn’t have one together. Tiffany probably knew all along, because Tiffany had nestled herself so deep in her heart already that there wouldn’t be a thing she could hide. She really hadn’t loved Tiffany enough to have her believe otherwise.

“I’m sorry,” she said again, because as she swallowed her tears, these were the only words that still rested on her tongue. “I’m sorry.”

Tiffany chuckled. “Don’t be. I knew you would give up on me. Maybe not today, but someday you will.” Her voice got softer, “I love you, but that’s how it is, isn’t it?”

Taeyeon shook her head, sad. “No, “ she whispered softly, “That’s not it.”

“I think it already is, though. When you thought of breaking up,” Tiffany said, tucking away loose strands behind her ear, the back of her fingers lightly brushing her cheek. “But that’s okay. It was expected.”

It was expected. How could Tiffany think like that, she thought. It wasn’t expected, it wasn’t. She had come to terms with herself, loved herself for who she was and she hadn’t expected her feelings to be the way they were – lost, confused and hopeful, reckless the next when she was with Tiffany. She was just a girl, but right now, she hated herself, because the one she loved knew that at one point she wasn’t enough.

She grabbed Tiffany’s hand and kissed it gently, giving it little pecks until a tear dropped from the corner of her eyes.

“I’m sorry,” she said again, “I’m such a fool sometimes, but we’ll be okay. I promise.”

She felt Tiffany’s eyes on her and she looked into them as she lifted her head. Tiffany looked unimpressed. Tiffany had probably heard that a million times and the only thing

she could do was move closer and peck her lips softly until she felt Tiffany respond.

“Don’t promise me anything,” Tiffany breathed against her lips, “I’m tired of promises.”

Her heart grew sadder at Tiffany’s confession and she grazed her fingers along Tiffany’s jaw ever so slightly.

“Is that why you were at the club so often?”

The pieces fell together and she saw Tiffany stiffen as the question reached her ears.

“Partly. It’s a habit that’s hard to break,” Tiffany said simply, now putting down her chopsticks and wiping her mouth with a napkin.

She looked at her sadly and hoped her next words could show Tiffany she loved her, and more than that – that she was willing to give up on everything, just not them, her. She was stupid sometimes, carried too many feelings and thoughts and wavered so easily when in front of her father. But she had made her choice and that she was going to be with the person who loved her for who she was. This was something she would see the end of.

“I can be your family. Even if I can’t ever replace Jennifer or your mom or your dad, I want to be your family.”

We Own Nothing But Empty Stomachs, Empty Hearts – 1.0

Tiffany always preferred her own place over Taeyeon's. Taeyeon's place was neat, but had no pictures, the walls were bare and her room was large but empty. It reminded her very much of herself somehow and whenever Taeyeon walked her back home and she opened the door to her own place, pictures of Yuri's funny faces and Sunny's weird art made her feel good.

Taeyeon laid in her arms right now, in her slightly too small of a bed. It was cramp and Taeyeon was practically on top of her as she rested her head on hers. Tiffany didn't mind, it made her feel like Taeyeon was stuck to her skin, sticking with her for a really long time.

"My dad called," Taeyeon murmured.

Tiffany immediately let out a long sigh. She remembered all the times talking to him on the phone, Taeyeon at her side telling her it was okay. They both knew it wasn't anymore when one day Tiffany put the phone down, her cheeks wet from tears. Tiffany had wondered why they tried, knowing they wouldn't last.

"What did he say?" she asked monotonously.

Taeyeon noticed her bored way of talking and frowned, sat up to look down at her.

"Can't you be a bit more enthusiastic? He's trying."

The bed creaked when Tiffany rolled away from her and pulled herself up from her bed. They had this conversation so many times that she was growing sick of it. He was family to Taeyeon, but what family could do this to you?

"I'm sure he is. Totally obvious."

"Tiffany." Taeyeon's voice was stern.

She turned to look at Taeyeon and noticed her eyes had changed. There were a lot of times she could recognize herself in Taeyeon's eyes – like they were mirrors of her own feelings and everything she felt could be understood by her. But she looked now, deeply, and really long too, and she knew Taeyeon was growing to be upset with her. Really, she thought, how could she be upset with the person fighting this battle with her?

“What?” she sneered, “You know that’s bullshit. He doesn’t want a damn thing to do with me.”

She could hear raindrops slamming violently against her window and it stirred more anger inside of her somehow. She sighed and watched Taeyeon rub her forehead.

“This isn’t easy for him, you know that,” Taeyeon said, “But you’re acting like you don’t even care if he tries or not anymore, so how am I supposed to feel about that?”

Tiffany scoffed. She cared. Way too much. Way more than she had allowed herself to, way more than she thought she would. She was terrible with feelings and relationships, but she had been there in the wee hours when Taeyeon cried after every visit of her parents. She had cried along with her, felt the same pain and forced out the same fucking fake laughter she had always hated when she was on the phone with him, tried to convince him, dipped her whole voice in all the sincerity and love she felt for Taeyeon. She practically gave her heart to her and Taeyeon in turn gave it to her father, have him abuse it to shreds and blood before giving it back. Well then, she was finally without a heart.

“You don’t care, do you?” Taeyeon said, looking at her with so much fire she felt her own anger growing.

“You really make it hard for me to care, Taeyeon,” she said, looking at her with the same intensity in her eyes. “I want a fucking girlfriend who isn’t ashamed of me, for one.”

“I’m not ashamed of you.” Taeyeon stood up from the bed and walked a few steps towards her. The frown on her face was still evident and Tiffany knew this was soon going to get out of hand. But really, she was trying to fucking much and this was what she was fighting for – someone who hid her away like she was a monster.

“You are.” Tiffany wiped away some tears. “Deep down you really are. Whenever we’re out in public, meet some of your new friends – you grow stiff, awkward and all you do is smile stupidly, brushing away comments about us.”

Taeyeon shook her head, the creases on her forehead growing deeper. Tiffany dropped her gaze, smiled bitterly.

“I know, Taeyeon. I know very well what I am to you.”

Taeyeon got closer, but she backed away. Her mind would race when Taeyeon was close, but her throat would close up and it would be impossible for her to say the things she wanted.

"I love you." Taeyeon raised her voice. "What more do you want?!"

She could feel them breaking away from each other – each word putting distance between them and so that was it, she thought. They weren't the ones who they fell in love with anymore.

"I want you to realize that nothing's going to change," Tiffany said, noticing Taeyeon's eyes turning meaningful at her words. "People will keep staring, they'll keep judging and you need to snap out of that daydream of yours, thinking they or your parents will ever accept us. Accept me."

The lump in Taeyeon's throat was obvious and Tiffany watched her swallow, eyes closed shut.

"So you're giving up? Is that it?"

In a moment of anger, spite, love – whatever it was Tiffany felt, she shoved the books that were on her right, stacked on her desk, to the floor with loud thuds and a cry right after.

"You're not listening!" Tiffany yelled. Her heart beat so fast she could feel it up in her throat.

Taeyeon kicked the books aside and rubbed her eyes in annoyance. "I am," she said, voice loud and strained. "You think I'm stupid to believe that one day we can make it, but why can't you see that we actually can?!"

She looked at Tiffany with eyebrows drawn together and all Tiffany wanted to do was slap her back to reality, because Tiffany wanted this more than anyone else.

"I'm just... I don't know why I grow stiff, I don't know why every single thing people say about us affects me in some way," Taeyeon said, her voice louder, but slightly trembling, "But that's how it is now and if you want to feel all special and scream your love to the world then go ahead and, and..."

And silence. Somebody finally had the guts to put it out there and suddenly it dawned onto Tiffany how easy it was. That was how the people in her life left – they left, because it was easy to find happiness somewhere else. Jennifer probably thought heaven was a pretty good place, mom and dad, too. This goddamned world, Tiffany thought, this goddamned world could go and fuck itself.

"Go ahead and find someone else?" Her voice was soft, quiet. It filled their ears.

There was a stray of light coming from her window and Tiffany noticed it had stopped raining. There was the sun and the dusts in her room were playing in a chaotic dance in its ray. The room suddenly got so beautiful – the white walls were painted color, like a soft unexpected blush. And here they were, breaking apart.

Taeyeon's body was still. Her mouth hung open, just a little bit and maybe she didn't dare to answer or maybe she just was too stubborn to, but she just stood there, looking at her, with an unexplainable spark in her eyes that Tiffany couldn't decipher.

"Maybe I will then," Tiffany said calmly, "You go find your prince charming, get married, have kids and be happy. I'm sure your parents will be delighted."

The dusts had settled, but now her words were the ones flying lifelessly in the softly lit room.

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The food in front of her was getting cold and she watched all the other students finding some place to hide from the rain outside. The campus restaurant wasn't packed like usual, but there were a few loud kids at the back, laughing at a funny story one of them just told. Taeyeon had ordered her favorite dish here, but today it tasted odd and she had trouble swallowing her first bite. She wondered if Tiffany was like this too – unable to eat even a week after their fight.

"Can I join you?"

She looked up and pushed her memory far back to the last time she saw her.

"Sunny?"

The girl smiled and nodded, sitting down anyway as Taeyeon looked at her questionably.

"Glad you remember me. It's been a while we've seen each other."

"Yeah," Taeyeon agreed, "How come I never see you on campus anymore?"

Sunny gestured for someone to get her order and said something about a baguette. The guy who came to their table wasn't the one who took her order.

"I don't go to classes unless I want to. I'm doing good so far with just a few lectures and my books, so that's why," she said.

Impressed, Taeyeon nodded and pricked the already cold burger on her plate. There was a slight hesitation as she spoke, because Taeyeon was stubborn and she really didn't want to look worried, but it's been a week and she feared the worst.

"How's Tiffany doing?"

She heard Sunny chuckle, putting down her knife and fork. "She's not my girlfriend, how should I know?"

The defensive tone in her voice cut through Taeyeon and it was obvious Sunny knew more.

"We had a fight," she said solemnly. "I just want to know how she's doing."

Sunny chewed her baguette leisurely, putting sugar in her tea. One block and she stirred.

"She's doing fine." Taeyeon narrowed her eyes, but she just stirred her tea some more, before putting in one more block of sugar. "We've always taken good care of her, don't worry."

Taeyeon shook her head, "You don't have to, I'm taking care of her now."

And Sunny laughed softly, mockingly, like it was such a ridiculous statement to make. "You're doing one lousy job then."

The words sunk in and she froze, gripping the table cloth until it wrinkled and her knuckles turned white. "Really," she said, almost failing to keep her anger away.

The last piece of baguette seemed too hard for Sunny to bite, so she tossed it aside and sipped her drink instead. She pulled out her wallet from her bag and put her share of the bill on the table.

"Listen," she said, brushing away crumbs from her lap. "I know what's going on. And I know Tiffany better than anyone else." She leaned in closer, pushing Taeyeon's plate away from her.

"Tiffany doesn't look back. Not on people who aren't family. Once you become someone from the past, that's all you'll ever be – history." She continued when Taeyeon was silent. "She can love you with all her heart, give you everything she has, but when you're walking away, she can cut you off like you're nothing at all." She eyed Taeyeon and Taeyeon let her eyes fall lightly, letting the words roam her mind.

"You're not family."

The words hit her, stabbed through her. She looked at Sunny, trying to find some hint of dishonesty in her words.

Sunny called the waiter and before he was at their table, she slipped the money to Taeyeon's side and whispered a few last words of warning.

"Either stop acting like a coward or let her go if you can't even take care of her properly."

*

The grave was covered with a layer of dirt. Tiffany wiped it clean with a piece of cloth and smiled sadly as she put down some flowers next to it. The wind was a bit strong today, but it was a good day – the sun didn't shine much, but it was moderately cloudy, breezy. The way Jennifer used to like the weather.

"It's been a while," Tiffany said, making herself comfortable, crouching down and folding her arms neatly on her knees. "How've you been?" she asked softly.

The silence was almost unbearable, but Tiffany smiled through her tears anyway, making conversations in her head.

The front door was open when she got home one day. The air clung uncomfortably on her skin and there was something going on, in the back of her head she knew something happened. The stairs she climbed squeaked with each step in their old home. It was an old little house, just outside the city. They had lived there for ages and it was hard for the first few years when they were the only ones left to fill the space.

There were streaks of blood on the floor when Tiffany stepped inside her room. The curtains were drawn, it was dark, but she could see Jennifer's head clearly lolling to the side, her lifeless body sunk in together like a weak doll. Tiffany had that image in her head for the next following years, haunting her in her sleep, as she woke up, as she tried to live on.

"I had a big fight with Taeyeon. You think we're going to break up?" And silence was again her answer. She smiled weakly at the grave in front of her and nodded, "I think so, too." Her words so soft, perhaps only she could hear.

"Taeyeon has to be the one leaving though. I can't have her end up like me."

Forever Is When I'm Left – 1.1

Hyoyeon laid spread out on the couch, leaving her barely any room to move. The weather had been changing a lot and now Hyoyeon had opted to stay home instead of meeting her new date as the rain came pouring down. Taeyeon herself had been avoiding home – the word leaving a bitter taste in her mouth, but she had missed Hyoyeon and the movie playing on screen was just there to fill the heavy silence. Everything she felt, everything that happened weighted down the light air.

“So you broke up?”

Taeyeon looked down at her folded legs and plucked away a speck of dust from her pants.

“No.” Annoyance obvious in her tone. “People don’t break up like that. I mean, it was just a really big fight.”

Hyoyeon tucked her arms under her head as she stayed silent and watched the TV. It was some horror movie, but Taeyeon felt more scared thinking about Tiffany.

“People do break up like that, you know.” The couch made a weird sound as Hyoyeon moved her body, the place where her legs were was warm. “That was how we broke up.”

Taeyeon glued her eyes to the screen. Hyoyeon was a joker, spitting out little lies to see her frown and tickle her the next second to see her smile. Hyoyeon always overreacted, her energy lifting her up too and it was rarely that she didn’t burst out laughing having a conversation that dug out some of her own feelings. But Taeyeon didn’t want to turn her head and see the sad look on Hyoyeon’s eyes, to see the most honest moment she had ever given to her after losing a love. She couldn’t face something that held so much truth – Taeyeon knew she couldn’t take it.

“Maybe that’s why she hadn’t picked up,” Hyoyeon said, her words sought out carefully. “When she said those things, about marriage and the prince charming, maybe– “

“We didn’t break up.” There was finality in Taeyeon’s voice, but tears too on her face. All she really wanted right now was for Hyoyeon to shut up, to seal her lips, to swallow the words or just somehow to have the words leave her ears as soon as they entered.

The couch dipped lightly as Hyoyeon laid her head down on her shoulder and gave her waist a squeeze. It made her cry more, because it was as though the words got clearer and clearer the closer Hyoyeon got.

“We didn’t break up,” she said again. But this time more softly, trying to convince herself more than Hyoyeon.

*

The ride to her parents was long and silent. She had imagined bringing Tiffany along many times. Tiffany would stretch her legs on the dashboard, short shorts to cool her skin and the wind blowing her hair into a mess of tangled locks. Taeyeon would be throwing her one arm up in the air and Tiffany would scold her for being careless, giving her a kiss a second later. She had imagined to drive by her old homes to point at the now renovated houses, someone else’s homes and tell Tiffany about a treasure she had buried there once and where it was that she broke her arm while playing. Tiffany would lay soft kisses on her hand as she brought her home.

The car screeched to a halt and the air inside the car pressed itself onto her shoulders. It was a struggle to breathe as she pulled her luggage from the trunk. It was a rainy day. It had always been a rainy day every time she went back to the old mansion. Her mother had already opened the door and she waited eagerly for Taeyeon to come inside.

Everything was such a blur. It became a difficult task to keep her mind from wandering. There, on that one small open spot on the wall she had spotted on her previous visit, she had wanted to put a picture up of Tiffany and her. It was just on the corner of the stairs, but you couldn’t miss it and she had enjoyed the thought of that – that every time as someone walked up the stairs of her parents’ home, her parents and she too, would be reminded of why she looked so smitten.

The spot was now taken. A new painting of her parents hung there. They must’ve had it done just recently, because the wooden frame was nicely polished, the paint still bright and fresh. She noticed there wasn’t any place for her.

Her mother said something vaguely in the background, maybe to her, maybe to her father. She ignored and took in the view of the grand hallway, high ceiling and dazzling chandeliers. She held onto her suitcase tightly, her jacket still not taken off and drops from the rain fell from her wet hair to the soft carpet.

Taeyeon remembered moving here when she was a teenager. The big windows and tall doors were attractive and she remembered sneaking out numerous of times, bringing liquor along with her while meeting friends. Her room was big, spacious and probably thrice the size of the room she had now. She remembered all that, remembered loving this mansion and breathing became even more difficult.

“Come here.” Her mother waved to her as she put away some pans. The kitchen was big too and she felt so small as she entered it.

"I bought you the cookies you like," she said and held out the plastic bag in her hand.

Her mother kissed her cheek and took the cookies smiling. The wrinkles on her face were so deep, marking journeys and worries as she aged. Taeyeon touched them, smoothed them out and looked at her mother with the most thoughtful look.

"I'm glad you're home now," her mom said, smiling at her, "Things will be like normal again."

Normal meant she liked guys. Normal meant having people accept her only if she was one of them. Normal meant she wasn't gay and normal meant she wasn't in love with a girl named Tiffany. In a sudden realization, Taeyeon wondered what was so great about being normal then.

"I want to talk to you." Her voice cracked. "And dad, too."

Her mother's face grew worried, but she kept her smile and nodded. She put aside the cookies and took her favorite drink from the fridge, telling her to drink it.

They walked over to her father's study room. The walls had stacks of books covering them and the room smelled like her father's cologne and cigarettes. He had a glass of scotch in his hand as they entered and Taeyeon's face scrunched up at the sight. It reminded her of the sticky memories hanging onto Tiffany's skin as she stumbled into her car that one night and she realized perhaps her father had some of them as well.

"Is smiling too much asked?" His low voice interrupted the silence. "You're finally coming home, after all."

She tried to force a smile, but her lips pressed into a thin line, a faint curve showing only. Taeyeon was a bad liar.

"So much for that," her father chuckled. He put down his drink and nodded to her mother and her to take a seat. It was like he knew and that only unsettled her more.

"I want to talk to the both of you," she said hesitantly as soon as they both sat down. She looked at them both and exhaled through her mouth. She honestly didn't know what to say, but Taeyeon figured the truth would do.

"It's about Tiffany."

She heard her father cough loudly and her mother looked at her questionably. "Who's Tiffany?"

The look on her face must have been so incredulous that her mother shifted awkwardly in her chair, keeping her eyes on her father.

"Her ex," he said, noticing the stare, "That girl I told you about."

"My girlfriend." And it came out a lot harsher than she intended it to be, but well, so much for that. They hadn't broken up. "We didn't break up."

Her father raised an eyebrow, seemingly surprised at the revelation and he leaned back against his chair, watching her grow more restless.

"You should, soon," he said, "She seems nice, but she's not for you."

"She's not for me?"

He sighed and twirled the pen he had in his hand. "You know you're not. She won't be happy with you and most importantly, you won't be happy... Being with a girl." His last words muttered under his breath.

It was her turn to sigh, albeit shakily, and watching her holding back her tears, he dropped his pen and looked at his wife with a tired look. She looked away.

"We've had this talk before. You're home now. Stop thinking about her and let's just be how we used to be, okay?"

Taeyeon ignored him, ignored his words. Being back home made her feel incredibly weak somehow and it put her in a solemn mood. The sadness, however, brought out every one of her other feelings and being in love was the one she wanted to keep.

"We had a fight," Taeyeon said finally, a frown gracing her face. "A really big one. She doesn't answer the phone, is nowhere to find on campus, doesn't open the door for me... And it's because of you."

Her vision was getting blurry and she realized she was crying. Really crying, with fat drops of tears rolling from her cheeks onto her jeans and her shoulder shaking violently as she choked on her words. It was all because of them.

"Tiffany gets really lonely at night, you know that?" She wiped her tears with the back of her hand. "I used to hold her really tight. And sometimes, she gets those nightmares and then she'd frown in her sleep. I really hate it when she does, I really hate it."

She looked at them, one by one and their faces were so blank, so full of nothing that she just cried more and perhaps even if she got her luggage now and stormed off, she wouldn't ever stop crying.

"I really hate it," she repeated, "But look at what you've done to me." She clutched her hand against her chest, tears falling. "Take a look at me. You've made me like this."

This. This Taeyeon. This stupid, worthless Taeyeon who didn't dare to kiss in public, who couldn't ignore stares from random strangers, who's life was being steered by this society. She wanted to go back to the Taeyeon who always wanted to hear Tiffany sing before she went to sleep, called out her name as she drifted off and who gave random tickle attacks in the middle of the night, only to earn a kiss later on.

"I'm useless now, dad." She looked at them and bit down the fresh tears. "I'm useless, mom. I'm useless, I'm scared and I can't even be there for the one I love." She almost choked. "Tiffany... Tiffany might not even want me anymore, because I'm this useless."

"It's for the better," her mother said, barely cutting through her words and she felt like falling again after five seconds of standing up. Had her mother heard anything she said at all, she wondered, because her eyes were pricking, red and blurry and her heart laid there on the ground for them to see. But they just stepped on it and stepped on it and Tiffany must've felt this way, too. "We just want you to be happy."

"Do I look happy to you?!" She yelled and shut her eyes closed to press the tears down.

"Is this the face of a happy person?!" She opened her eyes to look at them, piercing her eyes hot from tears through theirs hard. "Is this how you imagined your daughter to look like being happy?!"

It was impossible to control her voice, to control the volume, because as she yelled out those words, everything was gone anyway. There was nothing anymore, things were broken and her father left without saying a word, without casting a glance towards her way.

"Mom?" she called out, voice much softer and its trembles obvious in the cold room.

Her mother just sat there, frozen, blank and lifeless on her chair. She stared straight ahead and her eyelids closed down heavily, Taeyeon could tell she was exhausted. So very much tired of her.

Love Is One Without – 1.2

Taeyeon wandered the streets for a long time. Probably hours, her feet in pain with every step and her arms limply hanging on her sides. She watched the people walking towards her, their eyes boring the back of her skull as they passed her and her legs wouldn't stop walking.

She hadn't heard from Tiffany. Tiffany probably thought she was a burden, an unbearable weight she wanted to get rid of and Taeyeon thought she was really right. Because she didn't want herself either. She was insecure, felt attacked with each glance and was smothered in self-pity and fear and sadness – it was her, no matter how much she hated it. It was her and she hated it.

Her mother looked really happy when she stood there with her big suitcase on their doorstep. She had smiled, laughed, patted her back and told her to come in. Taeyeon did and then she thought that it wasn't her home anymore, somehow she realized that at some point. Maybe when she noticed the stairs and floors were much cleaner, not having such filthiness like her present or when the air smelled like a mix of strong liquor and fresh laundry. She was sure the home she went back to wasn't hers when she thought of Tiffany then, suddenly, out of nowhere, surprising her, catching her off guard. And there she was, with her big suitcase in the hallway of her home and then struck with the realization that it wasn't anymore.

Goodbye, mom, she had said. *Goodbye, dad*, she had said. Their smiles had faltered long before that, their grip on her hand loosening and as she turned around, dragging her suitcase with her, crying silently at the loss of her family.

But she hadn't heard from Tiffany. Tiffany hadn't called – hadn't answered her calls, she hadn't texted – hadn't answered her texts, she hadn't come to find her even as she left numerous notes at her door. And she kind of knew Tiffany. Probably not as well as Sunny did, probably not as well as Yuri seemed to. But she had seen a side from her that not everyone saw and she knew Tiffany could go on without her. Taeyeon herself couldn't do very long without her, because she had stopped counting the days after the week went by and it drove her mad, watching the clock tick each second and the phone dead of Tiffany's name, her room avoid of Tiffany's voice.

She missed her so much and she actually didn't really notice until she went home one night and realized Tiffany's toothbrush had picked up dust, some of her shorts still scattered under her bed.

Taeyeon felt a presence next to her and an old man held up a cup of coffee, urging her to hold it.

“You look so down. I thought you might need a boost.”

His smile was friendly and his eyes reminded her of her father’s – very soft, yet grounded and stern. She breathed and said ‘thank you’ softly to him.

The bench she was sitting on was still damp from the rain earlier, but she had no idea how she ended up here, why she sat down and how this man noticed her. But she took his cup of coffee gratefully, his calloused fingers feeling rough at the touch.

“Sometimes all you need is a smile from a stranger,” he said as he watched her blow the coffee. “I gave you a smile *and* coffee, yet you seem to want more.” He chuckled lightly and watched a few kids jumping in pools of rain.

Without allowing herself to think things over, covering her mouth and just keeping it shut, she looked straight into his eyes and smiled a small sad smile.

“I’m just not okay, sir. I don’t know if I’ll ever be,” she said solemnly, her eyes far into the distance.

His response didn’t come right away, but she noticed him leaning back, getting more comfortable.

“I’m not either,” he confessed. He wore an exhausted smile as she turned to look at him and the smiling eyes she had just seen before were now filled with an oddly familiar sense of nostalgia.

“Why not?” she asked softly, careful to not step over the thin thread to his heart. Maybe he, just like her, wanted to protect it somewhat more now.

He met her eyes now and Taeyeon couldn’t will herself to look away. His eyes felt so sad and even though she felt herself so small and young in front of him, she felt like she kind of knew how that felt like, being sad.

“I lost my wife,” he began, eyes still on hers. “I fell in love with her forty years ago. I loved her to death and I did everything for her.” He chuckled bitterly, looking down. “She loved me a lot too, but I was a lousy husband. Always drowned myself in work, coming home late.”

Taeyeon put down her cup of coffee next to her and she put her hand on top of his. It was cold, it felt rough, but she thought her hand could warm his.

“What happened?”

He looked at her, sad. "She left me," he said, took a deep breath then and sighed, eyes already far away. "I was always stubborn and every time we had a fight I'd refuse to apologize. She loved me, but chose someone else in the end."

"I thought she loved you?" Her voice shook and she recognized his words as soon as he spoke.

"She got tired of me. I never once thought that she could, but she did. She said that love wasn't enough to keep a relationship. I wasn't there for her."

He picked up the cup of coffee in between them and gave it to her again to drink it. "She re-married to this really great guy. Mind you, I was really handsome when I was younger," he grinned, "But this guy protected her, loved her, didn't run away from her and she told me years after when we met coincidentally, that she grew to love him then. Because he made her feel loved." He patted her head and she felt her eyes glaze with a thin layer of tears. He reminded her so much of her father.

"So why are you so sad?" he asked.

Taeyeon looked down on her cup, traced the edges with her finger. The coffee had cooled off. Her fingers were cold again.

"I don't want the one I love to love someone else."

*

Tiffany stepped inside and even after months of distancing she could find herself fitting in right away. Heads were already turning as the bouncer yelled hello at her, his voice barely audible over the loud music.

She smiled at him, tugging her lips so far up it showed her gums and added wrinkles to the corners of her eyes. She was getting so good at this that no one noticed anything Taeyeon ever did.

The dance floor was crowded, but she skipped to the bar and gave the bartender her best smile. He recognized her.

"You haven't been here in a while, welcome back," he smiled.

"Glad to be back," she said, eyes flickering sadness only for a second. "An After Eight, please."

“Coming right up.”

The alcohol was setting her skin on fire. Tiffany couldn't remember how many drinks she had had already, but it burnt her so much inside, burnt her throat, her skin, her mind. And the stupid alcohol somehow couldn't burn her memories.

They were heading somewhere. Tiffany could remember Taeyeon's tousled hair, hand resting on her thigh as she drove. It was pitch dark, they didn't know where they were going, but they went anyways. Taeyeon drove carefully with her faint headlights only seeing five meters ahead. Throughout the ride they kept touching – stroking hands, kissing knuckles, caressing thighs. Taeyeon probably only did because she wanted to be kept awake, but Tiffany really just wanted to touch her. As she felt her skin, smoothed out the wrinkles in her vest, laid butterfly kisses on her hand – she felt her. Taeyeon smiled at her, responding, freeing soft words into the small space of their car that were often left unspoken otherwise. She could tell Taeyeon was real then.

Tiffany couldn't remember where they ended up, but she remembered the ride to be terribly long. Her back ached and her neck was stiff and all she could really, really remember was the next morning when she woke up with a start on an empty bed. Taeyeon went to make eggs, but she didn't wake up to her and that somehow made her really sad.

Someone was sitting next to her, dangerously close, so close that she felt uncomfortable. He smelled good, but his cologne was too strong for her and it gave her a headache that would've felt like her head split in two otherwise. But Tiffany was so tired tonight that she honestly didn't feel much at all – just a faint throbbing, nothing more.

She kept her eyes on her almost empty drink and was startled when another After Eight slid her way. Tiffany looked up to see a wide grin. He winked at her and nodded to the drink, telling her it was his treat.

A flood of memories flashed by and she remembered all those times that she would accept random drinks thrown her way, that this scene in front of her felt like déjà vu, a repeat of every other night. On one of those every other night, she would drink five more on his expenses and later on thank him just outside the club, not making it to his home as she slammed his back against a wall in a filthy cramped alley.

She felt the first few tears of the night whelming inside of her and she pressed them down with what remained of her own drink. She felt her phone vibrating and sighed, ignored it. Tiffany turned her head to him and smiled.

“Thank you,” she said, “But I'm done drinking for tonight.”

Just as she was about to slide off her chair and walk out, she felt his breath against her ear, trying to get through her as the loud music surrounded them.

"You've been coming here often. Why not go somewhere else to get to know each other?"

He pulled back to give her space and looked at her with a sly expression. His cologne made its way through her nostrils and it really was too much for her now.

She held onto his sleeve, steadying herself to stand up straight. "I'm taken. Wear less cologne next time," she said, voice loud and clear. Her hand on his chest now and she patted it lightly, "And don't hit on lesbians." Her steps were steady as she walked out the door.

She would've gone home with him otherwise, probably spend the night or two if she felt like it. But Tiffany was Taeyeon's for the last half year and she was confident she would still be Taeyeon's years and years after, even after the latter had found her prince and lived happily ever after.

*

She ran until she was out of breath. It was dark, the rain had stopped, but Tiffany was missing and even Yuri couldn't find her. The moon lighted her path, but it was still dark and there wasn't a trace of Tiffany.

Tiffany had done this before, had run away so many times, but each time she hid herself someplace else and Sunny wanted to hate her so much that tears were streaming down her face.

"Where the hell are you?" she muttered to herself, clutching her cell phone to her ear, hearing it ringing endlessly.

She let herself fall down, knees scratching the hard concrete of the road and it hurt, but kind of like a good sort of hurt. In a way it made her feel like she did so much for Tiffany, with blood staining her jeans to prove it. But really, Sunny could even shed some more blood and transfer Tiffany's scars to her heart to share some of the pain. It would be futile though, because she knew very well that in order to take all of Tiffany's sadness away, she would have to carve out her heart for that.

The tears wet the cold pavement underneath her and she felt so afraid of losing Tiffany, so afraid of so many things and it suddenly hit her. Sunny picked herself up and dried her tears. She wasn't going to cry in front of Tiffany.

Thesaurus For Feelings Like These – 1.3

“How did you know I was here?”

Tiffany slowly caressed Sunny’s knees, once in a while blowing on it. She looked at the wound so thoughtfully Sunny grew uncomfortable. Her knees were bleeding, but they were merely scrapes. Sunny wondered why Tiffany didn’t care more about her own scars. She bit down the urge hold her.

“I remember being scared,” Sunny said, “When we were here, we were both really scared.”

The trees were swaying softly and they were at that spot again. Deep in the forest where they played hide and seek and where they were sheltered away from the world they had to go back to at the end of the day. This was the place where they shared their worries and discussed their future. Sunny looked at Tiffany and a lone tear trickled down her cheek. So much for not crying in front of her.

“I’m still really scared and I know you are, too,” she whispered, “But stop doing this. Stop scaring me.”

“I’m sorry,” Tiffany said sincerely, wiping Sunny’s face clean with her thumb. She held her hand against her cheek softly, chuckling lightly. “I’m such a mess, ain’t I?”

“Yes. Yes, you are,” Sunny smiled through her tears. “And I love you.”

Sunny loved her. In a way Tiffany probably wouldn’t ever understand, in a way she herself couldn’t ever understand. This girl in front of her was her little sister, her family, her dearest friend and she loved her in a way that the word love didn’t do justice to her feelings. She had her tears to prove it, her shredded jeans and bleeding knees to tell. But apparently loving her like that wasn’t the right way to do it, because Tiffany fell in love with a girl who didn’t have anything of that to show.

“I love you, too,” Tiffany smiled and Sunny knew it wasn’t the same I love you she meant. A loud agonizing sound cut through the moment. Tiffany’s phone rang just as she said those words.

Tiffany looked down at her phone. The screen lighted up her face in the dark and she just held it tight in her hand and looked at it. Sunny didn’t have to ask to know who was calling. The ringing died out abruptly after a while, only to be ringing again just a second later.

"You okay?" Sunny asked. Tiffany lifted her head up at her voice, like she almost forgot Sunny was here. Tiffany had forgotten about a lot of people and Sunny somehow thought in that moment that she was going to be one of them. Tiffany sighed before throwing the phone next to her.

"I guess so," Tiffany answered. She scanned the sky above her and sighed when there were no stars in sight. "I'm not sure though. I'm not sure if I'm okay."

The phone rang again and it startled Sunny. Tiffany seemed unfazed and closed her eyes, breathing in the cold midnight air. Sunny sat a little closer and shared some of her warmth, because she didn't want to be forgotten.

"Why don't you pick up?" she asked.

Tiffany picked up a flower instead from the grass underneath her and twirled it around in between her thumb and index finger. She remembered feeling like her world had spun around Taeyeon's.

"I was really happy with her," she said, smiling softly to herself. "The happiest I've ever felt in my life." The white petals and yellow nectar blur into one with the spinning motion and she let it fall softly after a while onto the grass, back to where it belonged. "And I've been thinking really hard. We just won't last."

Sunny bit on the inside of her cheek, tears urging to flow from her eyes. "You don't know that, Tiffany," she said softly. "Stop running away."

Tiffany chuckled, let her back fall back onto the soft grass and she looks up at the sky with the most fond expression.

"You think they saw how happy I was with Taeyeon?"

And Sunny knew who 'they' were, because only 'they' could give her that smile in a moment like this.

"I could see it," Sunny said and swallowed the bitter aftertaste painfully. "You looked beautiful."

"I always am," Tiffany smirked and let her gaze fall on Sunny for just a second. "But you know, being that happy, I realize, is dangerous. Life only gives you that much joy, that much happiness when all of it will be taken away soon. It's a patron and each time it gets taken away from you, it hurts a little more, until it doesn't anymore."

"You're hurting now, aren't you?"

Tiffany nodded, let out a melodic hum from the back of her throat and the ringtone from her phone somehow blend in nicely in the background. It's like a little song, for maybe five seconds, but Sunny thought it was beautiful.

"I don't think I want to feel happy again," Tiffany said. "Once I'm truly happy, things will change and I don't think I can handle it anymore. I think I'm okay with being like this... Not happy."

And she kept her eyes on that one star above, a faint smile on her face. Through the dark, Sunny could see her tears rolling down soft skin. Tiffany always cried in the dark.

"Pick up," Sunny said. She pushed down her pride and grabbed the phone, still ringing endlessly. "Stop doing this. Please." Her voice was shaking and she realized she was crying too, but it wasn't just Tiffany who was hurting.

The suddenness of it all made Tiffany sit up and she held Sunny in her arms, growing worried. "I'm sorry," she said repeatedly, "I'm sorry."

Sunny shook her head and dried her tears as fast as possible. She cleared her throat and held Tiffany's hand. She remembered seeing Tiffany when she was with Taeyeon. It hadn't been long, but she saw a lot of smiles, genuine ones, soft gazes and gentle looks and hands secretly held under the table as she passed them by on campus. She had seen her and she knew Tiffany was happy. She looked at her now and she knew Tiffany wasn't.

"I want you to be happy," she said, wiping away the streaks of tears on Tiffany's face. "That's all I want. Could you do that for me?" And she held the ringing phone in front of Tiffany, waiting for her answer.

The look on Tiffany's face was unreadable and she stared at the phone until the lights died off and flickered on again some moments later. On and off, on and off. It was like she was hypnotized, but then she grabbed it slowly, let it fall into her hand and moved closer to hug Sunny so close she held her breath.

"I want to be happy, too," Tiffany whispered after a while and Sunny felt like she could breathe again.

*

Taeyeon had called for the 35th time tonight, her hands trembling as she put down her phone. Jessica sat beside her, looking dejectedly, hand rubbing her shoulder.

"She didn't pick up?" she asked softly.

Taeyeon shook her head slowly. "I'm going to try again later."

Jessica just looked at her and they stayed silent for a long while. Taeyeon had her head down and she looked so small, so vulnerable that Jessica couldn't help but give her a big hug.

"Don't be sad, okay?" she whispered against her hair, "I like it when you smile."

She felt Taeyeon shaking underneath her and she pulled back to see her cry, a small sad smile on her lips. "But I am sad right now," Taeyeon said wryly. She stared down at the floor for a moment, thinking, and turned back to Jessica, a tear rolling down again on her cheek that had just dried.

"I just... I miss her. She's all I have left."

Her words made Jessica's stomach churn, a small bit of bitter disappointment growing inside her. Taeyeon had her and Hyoyeon too and she knew it was different, that having Tiffany was different. But spending years by Taeyeon's side and going through so many things together, this was the only natural reaction. She kept her face impassive, because she was the best friend and friends do that.

"I know," she said. "She misses you, too. I know that."

"How?" And Taeyeon looked at her with sad droopy eyes, her face a mess and probably her heart all ugly, too. She fixed her hair.

"Because," she said, pulling down stubborn strands. "Remember when... when he cheated on me? The second time?"

Her voice came out tight and forced, but she needed Taeyeon to understand this and continued when she nodded, holding her hand to silently comfort her. Jessica smiled.

"I'm fine. Just that... when I caught him with that girl and finally threw away all his stuff, our pictures, presents and lastly him, too... During that time, I never stopped loving him."

Taeyeon's expression was hard to read as she slowly turned to look at her. She stroke her hand, a sign for Jessica to continue.

"Even as I left him, spent all that time afterwards with you girls and met other guys, there wasn't a time that I didn't love him. I missed him every second he wasn't there."

When I ignored his calls, burnt our pictures and pretended like I didn't know him when we happened to bump into each other... I missed him during all of that and I loved him during all of that."

She couldn't figure out what went on in Taeyeon's mind, but she had that flicker in her eyes and it made Jessica feel hopeful. That maybe some part of her pain could help Taeyeon.

"She misses you. She loves you." There was no space for any argument in her statement. "I know you know."

Taeyeon nodded and smiled at her. She loved it when Taeyeon smiled. "I'll call her now," Taeyeon said and pressed the speed dial as soon as Jessica smiled back at her.

The phone rang, for an eternity in her mind, and she ended the call after it went to Tiffany's voicemail. She dialed again and this time, after a lifetime of waiting, or maybe just half a minute, the ringing tone stopped and Taeyeon was met with a silence on the other line. Her heart jumped.

"Tiffany?" Her voice was soaked through and through with eagerness, but she didn't really care. "Tiffany? Are you there? Please answer me. I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

"Hi," she heard her softly say. She let herself bathe in her voice for a while, closing her eyes and sighing in relief.

"Hi," she smiled through the phone. Taeyeon felt in love again and it felt damn good. "I missed hearing your voice."

It was silent again and Tiffany probably didn't know what to say, but that was okay. She glanced at Jessica from the corner of her eye and she urged her to go on.

"I want to see you," Taeyeon said, holding on to the phone tightly. "Have you been doing alright?"

Tiffany took her time to answer. "I don't think I'm alright."

Her heart fell. She felt her hand wet and realized tears were falling, too. Taeyeon took a deep breath and kissed the mic of her phone, hoping in some stupid way to have it magically fly to the other side of the line.

"I'm sorry," she whispered, "But it's okay now, we'll be okay. I promised you, didn't I?"

"Yeah," Tiffany said. Her tone was so quiet and Taeyeon wanted nothing more than to know what she was thinking.

"Did you... Did you miss me?"

It was almost an impossible task to do, asking that. A no could kill her, but a yes could too. Either way, she'd die having Tiffany's voice as the last thing she heard and somehow, that didn't sound so bad.

"Yes."

And she just flew to heaven.

"Yes?" She almost couldn't contain her happiness. "You did," she grinned, "you did."

Tiffany was silent on the other line, but she could almost picture her dropping down her head, hiding her blush.

"Taeyeon?"

"Yes?"

"You missed me too."

And her lips formed a smile, one of which Jessica thought suited her very well.

"Yeah. Yeah, I did. I think a whole lot more than you missed me. A whole lot more."

Tiffany chuckled then and it was low, husky, freezing time. Tiffany could do that, Tiffany could do anything to Taeyeon.

"Tiffany," Taeyeon said and she grew serious, anxiously breathing through her mouth.

"What?"

She didn't say anything for a while, fearing pain that could be worse than anything she had felt before.

"Don't find someone else," she whispered finally, almost inaudible. "Please? Promise me."

Taeyeon waited for an answer and even Jessica grew worried sitting next to her, noticing her nervous expression. She closed her eyes shut, preparing for the blow. The zooming static noise on the other side made her only more frustrated.

But the line stayed dead silent. Tiffany didn't say a word, because she thought Taeyeon knew very well she didn't do promises.

Over Blue Walls And I – 1.4

They stared idly at the wall in front of them, sinking down to the ground and resting their backs against the fridge. Yuri often told stories here. Stories of people she had loved, stories of people who didn't and sometimes during Halloween, if she were in the mood, she'd tell ghost stories too. Tiffany loved ghost stories, because she would pretend to be scared and Yuri would hug her to sleep, right there on the cold kitchen floor.

"Next term already starts in a few months. What are you going to do until then?"

Yuri stretched her legs out and lazily put her head on Tiffany's shoulder.

"Maybe some volunteer work. I'm not going to do nothing for two months," she answered and smiled when Yuri scoffed.

"Please, miss Tiffany," Yuri groaned, "Take care of yourself first, before you go and help others."

"Shut up." She jabbed Yuri in the stomach.

They laughed and the weight of their feelings, work, college – all dissolved with a small happiness. Tiffany put her head against Yuri's and thought she smelled like some kind of sweet fruit.

"What are you going to do," Yuri asked, "when she's here?"

Tiffany hadn't really thought of that question. She just knew that they were going to see each other. And really, thinking about it now, all she really wanted to do was to lead Taeyeon to her bed, kiss every inch of her body, have Taeyeon kiss every inch of her body and make sure that she remembers her for the rest of her life. Tiffany didn't know where they were heading, didn't know where they would end, but if they were ever going to end then Tiffany wouldn't be able to let go. She knew that now, and she wanted Taeyeon to not ever want to let go either.

"I just want to love her," she said then and Yuri just intertwined her long, cold fingers with hers, silently comforting her.

*

The doorbell rang and Yuri scrambled on her feet to open the door. She looked back, just as she was to about to grab the doorknob, at a Tiffany who was still sitting solemnly against the fridge.

“You have to make up your mind now, Tiffany.”

The big window of their living room and the drawn curtains made chance for sunlight to sneak in and it gave Yuri’s face a strange sad glow as she looked down at her.

“Tell me you don’t want her and I’ll make sure she leaves. You won’t ever hear of her again. Tell me.”

There was no urgency in her voice, no annoyance, no spite, but it was strained with a weariness Tiffany had grown familiar with in the last few weeks. A weariness that showed Yuri wanted her to be the old Tiffany again – resolute, bold and unpolished. She looked down at herself, her clothes, and wondered what happened for her to be holding onto something like this for so long, dragging out feelings she had never felt before.

The doorbell rang again and Tiffany laughed softly to herself, knowing the answer – Taeyeon happened to her.

She looked up and Yuri was smiling, watching her.

“I’ll get the door,” Yuri said.

*

“How long have you known Tiffany?”

Jessica stirred the tea in front of her. She had heard a thing or two about Yuri. The more Tiffany and Taeyeon were together, the more often she would see Yuri around campus – always waving, always smiling, but growing curt when she came closer although still playful. Yuri was said to be rough edges and drunken nights five times in a week, a more reckless version of the Tiffany Jessica had grown to like. But somehow, they didn’t seem alike.

Yuri put down her mug of coffee after spending a few seconds blowing it. The day grew dark fast and soon the room was dimly lit, the coffee’s steam flowing up into the air and surrounding Yuri. Jessica thought it was almost magical. Huh, she thought.

“Practically all my life,” Yuri answered, just as Jessica was about to blank out. “Well, not really. We met when we were both fourteen, but it feels like a lifetime.”

“How did you meet?”

“High school.” Yuri turned around to put small bag of coffee beans on the counter. When Jessica looked at her blankly, she chuckled. “Tiffany likes fresh coffee in the morning.”

Lowering her head, Jessica nodded and kept her eyes on her teacup. Yuri had a motherly aura when it concerned Tiffany and it was kind of heartwarming to see. A small smile crept on her face.

“Were you in the same class?” Jessica lifted her head. “When you were in high school?”

Yuri rested both her arms on the table, a palm holding up her chin. “No.” She didn’t elaborate and just looked down for the longest time. Although it was a simple general question, Jessica felt like she had stepped foot into something too personal.

“Thank you,” Yuri suddenly said. And Jessica felt uncomfortable under Yuri’s softened eyes. They held a sadness Jessica couldn’t place.

“For what?”

“For taking care of Tiffany once in a while,” Yuri said softly, “I know. Thank you for that.”

In that moment, some kind of feeling overwhelmed Jessica and she wondered then if anyone ever thought of her the way Yuri thought of Tiffany, if anyone ever took care of her and that she never had the chance to know.

“I wish I had someone like you,” she blurted out. Yuri didn’t look surprised, but she didn’t hold the mischievous grin she often wore either and that made Jessica exhale in relief.

“You wouldn’t want someone like me,” Yuri said after a few seconds of silence. They looked at each other and Jessica kind of understood why she said that the longer they held their gaze.

“If you get to know me better, you wouldn’t want someone like me either,” Jessica spoke. And as soon as she did, all of the armor she wore fell down to the floor.

Yuri chuckled, “Well then.” Her eyes had a spark. “We’re a great match.”

*

Her skin was much softer than she remembered as she pressed her flushed body against her. They didn’t make out, didn’t make love, didn’t do anything. Tiffany had her face

buried in the mess that was Taeyeon's hair and all she wanted was to cry and tell her she wanted to quit, stop whatever this was, because she loved her and beyond her knowledge it had grown into something even deeper. It scared the hell out of her.

Taeyeon didn't say anything. But Tiffany felt her hand moving up and down her back, her clothes not doing anything to stop her from shivering. They stayed silent until the darkness swallowed them slowly, bit by bit, piece by piece. Tiffany watched the room turn grim and when she could finally peel herself away from Taeyeon, lift her head and look down at her, Taeyeon greeted her with look she recognized to be the first look she ever gave her.

Under the flashing lights and strangled in cigarette smoke and alcohol, she had seen her back then among the crowd – bright eyes and a piercing stare that followed her until she escaped into the night. For maybe a measly three seconds that their eyes met, she would have to remember Taeyeon for the rest of her life. There were times, a lot of times, especially lately, that Tiffany thought that was so unfair.

"Don't find someone else."

Taeyeon's voice cut through her thoughts and she was back into her eyes, that same look never faltering. Tiffany swallowed down a tear, because she really wanted to cry.

"I don't want you to find someone else. I didn't mean it."

It was a soft plea, Taeyeon's eyes already brimming with tears and Tiffany leaned down to kiss each one of her eyelids.

"I can't promise that," she breathed, putting distance between them. Taeyeon drew circles on her back, her face drawing closer to her again, nuzzling her nose lightly against her skin. "I can't promise you something I don't know if I can keep."

And it was true, no matter how much it hurt her to say it. If she had any say in life at all, she wouldn't be lying here in bed with Taeyeon, feeling in love and torn and hurt and spending the last half year with the widest grin on her face. If she had any say at all, she would've ripped her heart out of her chest and burned it years ago already.

Hurt flashed on Taeyeon's face, but she nodded anyway, shutting down her eyes forcefully to keep her tears in.

"Taeyeon."

"Hmm?"

Tiffany drew out a shaky breath and she felt Taeyeon's soft fingertips graze her collarbone.

"Please leave me."

She felt the touch suddenly halting and Taeyeon's body grew rigid underneath her. Tiffany murmured her pleas softly in her hair. Taeyeon had lost weight, Taeyeon had eye bags all the way down, Taeyeon had cried, Taeyeon was tired, Taeyeon was unhappy. And she was the cause of all that, Tiffany knew.

"I told you I'm no good," she whispered. "Look at you."

And her last words were almost lost in sudden sobs. Taeyeon pulled her in a soft hug and she felt so undone, so lost, so helpless and in love with this stupid girl who wouldn't let her go, who wouldn't let her let her go.

"Look at me," Taeyeon said and put her hands on either side of Tiffany's head, lovingly stroking her right temple with her thumb. The sobs were only growing more intense and Tiffany couldn't lift her head.

"Look at me," she urged and when Tiffany looked into her eyes she smiled the best smile she could muster through her tears. "Look how happy I am."

She laughed when she felt a wave of tears flowing down her cheeks, the irony not lost on her. "Don't mind my tears, they're happy tears," she said dryly and it drew out a laugh from Tiffany as well, her laugh echoing and roaming every little corner in Taeyeon's heart. She loved it so much.

Their little moment ended abruptly when Taeyeon's cell phone rang through the moment. Tiffany recognized the ringtone to be the one of many sleepless and tiring nights and her eyes grew hooded again, shifting away from Taeyeon for a small inch.

"It's your father," she stated quietly.

"It's mom," Taeyeon corrected her, rejecting the call as soon as she had it in her hands. She stared at it for a few seconds and the silence made Tiffany worried. She saw fresh tears wetting the sheets underneath them.

"Did something happen?"

She saw Taeyeon turn off the phone and put it on her nightstand. Her eyes were wet with warm tears when she turned around again and Tiffany brushed her cheeks softly, afraid to break her.

Taeyeon smiled and slowly pushed her down on her back. She shifted and lied next to her as well, arms comfortably to her sides and they stared at the ceiling together in silence. Their arms were touching and Tiffany found herself to be breathing in synch with Taeyeon after awhile. She turned her head a little to watch Taeyeon's chest rise and fall softly, her eyes tracing the cracks on her ceiling intently.

"I'm sorry."

Her whisper floated leisurely into the small space and Tiffany wondered if it had reached Taeyeon, until Taeyeon quietly held her hand and gave it a light squeeze.

"For what? For having ignored me for weeks?"

And Tiffany laughed softly, because actually no, she wasn't sorry for that. Tiffany knew what she wanted, had always knew what she wanted, but she also knew Taeyeon didn't. There had been a lot of times she caught Taeyeon wavering, wondering what decision to make, what the consequences would be – she watched her regret decisions, be torn between decision, unable to make decisions. So if Taeyeon had decided she didn't want her, then Tiffany didn't want to be there. It was kind of stupid, kind of childish, but Tiffany wanted Taeyeon to come to that conclusion without her presence to persuade her – her mind clean and the realization in its purest. She believed it was much easier then, letting her go.

"I'm sorry," she whispered again, this time more serious, "because being with me means things won't ever be the way you want them to."

"That's okay," Taeyeon whispered back, eyes still on the ceilings. "Just don't leave me."

Tiffany turned her body and softly let her breathing graze the soft skin of Taeyeon's neck. A kiss landed on her forehead and Taeyeon let her lips stay there. Their bodies were flushed against each other and somewhere very deep inside, Tiffany knew that this was something they wouldn't ever fully heal from. They weren't ever going to be okay, not like how they wished they could or hoped to be with all their might when they first kissed.

"I'll go see your parents," Tiffany murmured. Taeyeon's lips curved up into a tight smile against Tiffany's forehead and she wetted her skin from tears that wouldn't stop flowing down from her cheeks.

Epilogue

This was the place where Jennifer laid buried. Taeyeon had seen her in pictures that were neatly fitted in frames, angled accordingly on desks and salon tables. Tiffany never talked about her much, only showed her pictures of when they were little and smiled fondly at the memories once in a while. More often than not, she would cry and Taeyeon hated to see Tiffany cry, so she'd rather not talk about Jennifer at all.

Jennifer and Tiffany didn't look alike. Where Tiffany had a dazzling smile and large sparkling eyes, Jennifer had a high forehead and pronouncing cheekbones. Jennifer was really skinny, seemed less guarded than Tiffany and Taeyeon could see how that took its toll on her in the last few pictures that were left.

Taeyeon kneeled down and smiled down softly at the grave. This was the first time she got to meet her and she wished it was different; that she could hear her say hello back and tell her funny, embarrassing stories about Tiffany as they bonded. But here she laid and Taeyeon did the best she could, trying to be part of this little family.

They put down a large cake with a single candle on top. It was her birthday today; Jennifer nineteen now. It was hard to not feel sad at the thought that she should've been here with them, eating the cake, smiling and laughing and just being there with them. But Taeyeon figured she was doing all that in a way and look at her side to see Tiffany's quivering chin and trembling lips. She leaned in to give her a little kiss to halt the tears for a moment longer.

Tiffany bit down on her lip, the tears already brimming on the edge of her eyelids. She repositioned the cake at least five times, keeping her mind occupied and lighted the candle.

"Jennifer liked cake."

And as she put down their drinks and scooted closer towards the grave, her arms resting on her knees as she crouched, Taeyeon could see a few drops of tears falling to the ground. Today, Tiffany's face was flawless – naked, bare with no make-up and it made her so beautiful, even as she was crying. Taeyeon inched closer and let Tiffany lean in to her touch, until she was her second skin, giving her another layer of shield.

They didn't go home until it was too late and they were too tired to make love. Taeyeon wanted to so much, because she wanted to show Tiffany how much she loved her. But then Tiffany said, "Jennifer would've liked you. Thank you," as she tucked her in, the sheets ruffling as she leaned down to hug her. She wanted to say it, too. But no, *thank you* was a lot less than what Taeyeon felt for her, not enough to let her know how much

she loved her. But she whispered it back, soft against her ear anyway and held her hand. Tiffany fell asleep soon, but Taeyeon still wanted to let her know she loved her and so she sang her every possible love song there was throughout the night, until her voice got hoarse and scratchy, to prove it.

*

Tiffany woke up early the next day, exactly three hours before Taeyeon, gobbling down breakfast and moving from her bedroom through the living room to the kitchen like a mad woman. The apartment was now at its cleanest. Tiffany had spent the whole morning dusting, vacuuming, throwing out trash and wiping her dressers and floorboards and television until they all shone. She took a step back and looked at it with a nod, though not a satisfied one. This wasn't who she was – Tiffany didn't live like a neat freak, liked the scratches on her tables and saw the charm in her crooked stack of books in the corner. But this was for Taeyeon, for Taeyeon's parents, for them and Tiffany knew that sometimes, you had to lose a bit of yourself to fully love someone else.

Taeyeon came to stand beside her, looking grimly at the squeaky clean floor as she tightened the grip on her cell phone. Tiffany knew what that meant and she gently brushed the back of Taeyeon's hand with her fingers, her mood growing sad as well.

"They're not coming?"

It wasn't a question asked just because. She really wished they would come, even if she would hate herself more with each encounter they had. Taeyeon lighted up when she told her they would be here, her heart obviously growing at just the thought and she had imagined out loud how their first real meeting would go – would they like her cooking, how to get rid of awkward silences and how to proof to them they were happy.

Now, there's only the silence, the space, the apartment that wasn't them and Taeyeon broke down in an instant, like her skeleton just got ripped out from her body. Tiffany caught her and cried along as they crumbled to the floor – the very squeaky clean floor with no speck of dust, and Tiffany almost wanted to laugh, because this place would forever be stained with all the tears they shed.

She picked herself up, picked Taeyeon up and helped her sit on a dinner chair. Taeyeon was a mess; hair tangled and swollen eyes and she kissed her softly, stroking her hand.

"There's always a next time." Tiffany's words sounded so hollow, but she tried to smile and it urged Taeyeon to nod.

"I love you."

*

When Taeyeon woke up it was already evening. She had slept through the whole afternoon. Tiffany was rummaging through the kitchen and she walked out to see the dinner table ready to collapse – meat, vegetables, herbs, shrimps, noodles – all prepared and arranged neatly on their perspective plates. Tiffany turned around and she could see the red eyes, weary smile and her sagging shoulder and it was obvious Tiffany had cried a lot. Maybe even more than she did.

They moved closer to each other and Tiffany put down some drinks on the table before stroking Taeyeon's cheeks, looking at her with a weak smile.

"It's my first time making this," she said softly and it didn't really click in Taeyeon's mind, because she looked down at the dinner table again and wondered what they would be having tonight.

"You tried a new recipe?"

And Tiffany did that chuckle again. That low, husky chuckle that she loved so much. "Sort of," Tiffany said languidly, "I hope you like it."

She pulled her down to sit across from her. "I need you to close your eyes." Taeyeon did what she was told and smiled when Tiffany placed a chaste kiss on her temple.

It was quiet. Taeyeon saw black and little flickers of light; blue, red, yellow... but mostly black. They became little specks and the longer she had her eyes closed, the more vividly she could make out images. But they were blurry and it was hard to find something pretty in it.

"Done," Tiffany said. Taeyeon opened her eyes and then thought to herself that this image right in front of her was the most beautiful one. She stared until Tiffany smiled shyly, leaning across the table to give her a soft lingering kiss.

"Look down," she whispered, brushing her nose against hers after they part.

There, right under her nose was a messily, anything but a perfectly folded spring roll with two shrimps placed on top forming a heart.

"I haven't seen my parents in a really long time," she spoke. The water was rising, she saw. Just an hour or two before it reached them. "I really miss my mom and I really miss her cooking. She always made those spring rolls around this time of the year and I probably lived on it for weeks multiple times."

“You made me spring rolls,” Taeyeon whispered, choking on her words.

She looked up slowly at Tiffany to see her eyes red again, biting her lip to fight down tears. Her lips trembled so badly and she looked so small, so sad.

“When your mom–”

And Tiffany’s sentence got cut short. Tears were streaming down her face and her whole body shook, as if it was trying to gasp for air under water. She tried again and took a deep breath as she calmed down. There was that weak smile again.

“When your mom comes over and visits us, I’m sure she’ll teach me how to perfect them.” Her voice couldn’t be held steady though and she duck her head down, wiping her tears.

Taeyeon didn’t say anything. She looked down at the mess on her plate, the heart-shaped shrimps, and she wordlessly picked up the roll carefully, afraid to spill the contents, and ate it all in just a few bites. Her mouth was full, she was having a hard time chewing, but she cried and cried, her tears wouldn’t stop, because this was the best meal anyone ever cooked for her. Really, honestly, absolutely.

“It’s delicious,” she said and as her tears streamed down her cheeks, she reached for another spring roll Tiffany had already put aside.

Tiffany watched her, watched her devour plate after plate. The more she ate, the more she cried and Tiffany couldn’t help but cry as well, smiling sadly at her.

They didn’t say anything at all. Not after Taeyeon ate everything there was on the table; not after they did the dishes together; not after they cried in each other’s arms. In the silence that surrounded them all that time, they knew to fall asleep, fall into each other when there were no words good enough.

*

It was a night filled with stars, but no full moon. They woke up to find one another still awake. They kissed and held hands and led each other to the kitchen, lacing fingers all the way.

The lighting was bad and it was 4AM and half the world wasn’t awake yet. It was so silent, even as they opened the balcony door and invited the wind in, it felt like there was no one to disturb them.

Tiffany took out two spoons, a big bowl and as she was about to reach for the box of cereals, she felt Taeyeon's arms around her waist. They held her in place and she leaned back into Taeyeon's embrace.

"Why did you fall in love with me?" Taeyeon asked, whispering. Her breath tickled Tiffany's delicate skin and Tiffany smiled to herself. She played with Taeyeon's fingers on her abdomen.

"I thought you were what I could have."

And Taeyeon furrowed her brows in confusion and somehow Tiffany knew and she chuckled softly, her breath clinging softly to Taeyeon's eardrums.

"You were what I could have, if I wasn't who I was then. I don't know, I just... It's like I was the white gray sky and you were a faraway star," Tiffany explained, "and the closer you were, the more you shone. I realized that the white gray me didn't do you justice. So wanted to change and become the darkest night ever, but then there you were."

She turned around, putting her arms around Taeyeon's neck. She took in every detail as she looked at Taeyeon intently. "There you were, at your brightest, even if I had just slowly began to show a shade of blue in me."

Tiffany laughed softly as she looked at Taeyeon and Taeyeon laughed too, as she saw her smile.

"Did you even get what I was saying?" Tiffany laughed softly, "That was how I fell in love you though. I just... don't know any other way to explain it."

Taeyeon smiled, a dimple evident on her chin and she held her tighter, kissed the soft skin on her neck.

"That was how I fell in love with you, too."

Tiffany tilted her head, showing a lopsided smile and dragged her to the living room with their bowl of cereal. The floor was cold as they sat down, next to the couch. With each spoon, they looked up at each other, smiling softly. Today was one of those nights – one of those nights neither of them felt too sad. They just had each other and halfway through eating, they inched closer and closer, until no one was able to come in between them. Their kisses were soft, lingering and they tasted milk and strawberries and love and joy.

The world was about to wake up soon when they fed each other and it was something in this little moment, in the few intimate minutes they shared in the darkest hour of the night that they loved and wanted a lifetime together even more.

The sun peeked out, but not quite yet and it was past 4AM, they were in love and they ate their bowl of cereal with the constant hope that as the sun hit their eyes, they could be healed and be the best that they could be for one another.

The last kiss of the night was with tears streaked faces and the very wish for that day to be today.

Author's Note

I started this story as a challenge, as a way to improve, to express, to keep my thoughts in order, to get a message across as I do each time I write something. A Lot Like Yesterday is special, in the most obvious being its length – that it gives me space to lay out a complete plot, develop my characters to the core and create a world. It's a story that should be nothing original, but is, ultimately, very special to me, because it's a story I've spent my time on writing and one that I've told.

This whole story is based on the mood I was in when I happened to listen to Gummy's 골목을 돌면 (Around The Alley) one night. It is a song that doesn't bring back any specific memories – it doesn't bring me back to certain times of my life or certain people I've spent my time with. However, it does bring me a sense of nostalgia – to what, I don't even know. But it makes me feel all the things that I've felt years ago when I heard it for the first time, although I can't connect any of them to anything at all. It feels like déjà vu and I can't place it. It's strange, it'd odd, it's sad. And that's where the title came from: A Lot Like Yesterday. ALLY.

With this one I've used a whole lot of metaphors, a lot of parallels that played out in Taeyeon's and Tiffany's life and many underlying messages. I won't explain them all, because I think the great beauty of it is that people can give their own meaning to it. One of them, however, and one that constantly returns is the darkness. The two met at night, got to know each other at night, fell in love at night and found strength in the night – it is where they can be themselves, can let their worries out for no one to see and where they fall apart in each other's arms. Eventually, they came to watch the sunrise together and that signifies a start for this something new they have with each other.

Towards the end of the story you'll find a sentence that both Taeyeon and Tiffany's family use – "I just want you to be happy." Taeyeon's family steers her away from something they know will get her hurt: being a girl and liking girls and dreading the things people think and say about her. Yet on the other hand you have Tiffany's family – one of them being Sunny and she actually pushes Tiffany to take that leap, even if it can hurt her, because she knows Tiffany has to give herself a shot at happiness.

Part of why that is, comes from the fact that Taeyeon is greatly affected by all this. She has yet to fully accept herself and has trouble dealing with the fact that she isn't like what her parents want her to be, what society wants her to be. That is in contrast to Tiffany, who despite (or maybe because of) everything she went through, knows what she wants, knows who she is and what there is to expect. She has lost many people in her life, including her parents and sister. And as she steps into this relationship, there is nothing for her to lose – aside from falling even more into a growing depression that was bound to swallow her one day. But she *knows* that day might come.

Taeyeon, on the other hand, still has her parents and being with Tiffany and staying with Tiffany practically equals to losing them. That is why as their relationship progresses and what they have deepens, you see Taeyeon wavering. She loves Tiffany, but she also loves her parents and I think it's only realistic to show that side of hers. Her parents know she can lose a lot of things, while Sunny knows Tiffany has lost everything there is to lose. And even if it doesn't seem right, having Taeyeon's parents being like that and her actually thinking about breaking up with Tiffany, it is the reality they're facing. Because even if love can be so great and amazing, not all of us can afford to lose our family because of it.

And then there are the spring rolls. It's a very important part of the epilogue, because Tiffany made Taeyeon something that had always been her mother's thing. It reminds her of home, reminds her of her parents, reminds her of her past. When she ate the ones Tiffany made, without words and only tears, Tiffany grew to be her home in that silence, replacing her mother.

Aside from that part, there's also been a time that Tiffany had provided that comfort to Taeyeon missing her home - earlier in the story where they met up on the beach, as she hummed a song to Taeyeon. That was after Taeyeon told her about her father, who used to sing her to sleep. It might seem like Taeyeon doesn't do much in return for Tiffany, but Taeyeon does, in the end, what Tiffany needs most and that is staying with her. Taeyeon needs the comfort, the small gestures, because her wounds are still too fresh, too open and fragile. Tiffany, however, longs to belong. She longs to have people stay, proving her wrong and that's all she really needs.

The ending. It's really not an ending, is it? I wanted people to know, to realize that even if this story is just fiction, I still love my characters. I didn't want an ending for them, because I didn't want their story to end. It's actually really logical and that idea came upon me when I drank coffee out in my backyard watching two birds (perhaps lovers?) fly away from me. I saw them attached by the hips, thought they were lovely and adorable and as they flew away I wondered if they were looking for food together. Just because they flew away, didn't mean their lives ended there, that they already had an ending. Taeyeon and Tiffany will have to deal with the things that shape them, maybe for the rest of their lives - the parents, the insecurity, the uncertainty of the future - even after this, they will have to face it. But the most important thing is that they're together. They're going through all this together. Their story goes on, we're just not there to witness it anymore.

As for the story as a whole: it's not just about the hardships of being in a same sex relationship. Not at all - that's just a shell, a mold I've decided to put all the meanings in. This story is about accepting yourself, loving yourself for who you are, *not* being accepted by those around you, not being what the ones you love expect or want you to be. It's about individuals who each share their own kind of struggle, their own kind of

sorrow and pain. It's about dealing with the past, dealing with love, dealing with what you have now and what will come to you. It's about being a torn soul and trying to be a decent human being with your last breath. I hope I have conveyed all of that well.

But oh gee, this work has been exhausting – it drained me and I never knew it could to this extreme, but it did. I've spent many nights writing it, spent hours upon hours perfecting it – it's been my baby for three months. All I can really say is that I'm thankful and humbled by the amount of people reading this, relating to this and loving this. I won't promise to work even harder or to improve and be a better writer – because I think that's bullshit as I most likely won't be able to keep it. But you don't have to doubt that I will always put my heart out there with the stories I write.

Love always,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Aivy'. A small heart is drawn above the 'i', and a long, sweeping arrow extends from the end of the signature.

theninthtrack, and to friends – Aivy