

Tarnished Angels

# Tarnished Angels

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This is a work of pure fiction.

This is not real. In any way shape or form.

## **fic-tion (n.)**

*1. a. An imaginative creation or a pretense that does not represent actuality but has been invented.*

*b. The act of inventing such a creation or pretense.*

*2. a. A literary work whose content is produced by the imagination and is not necessarily based on fact.*

*b. The category of literature comprising works of this kind, including novels and short stories.*

Just so we're all clear :::grins:::

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### Dedication

This is the third book where I've sat and wondered what to put here.  
How do I thank everyone who has read this and found something in  
these words that touches them?

I can say thank you but really, that just doesn't do it.

Those two words don't touch the awe that you all inspire in me.

They really suck... those two words...  
because I need them to say so much more.

I need thank you to say; Oh God, I am so very honoured to have you  
read this story and so grateful for the words  
that you have given me.

I need thank you to say; I can't even talk.  
You're rendered me speechless.

So Thank You. All of You.

You know who you are.

Saranghae.

## **Tarnished Angels**

# 1

Suffering.

The first of the Four Noble Truths spoke of an awareness of suffering. Every phase of life and living brought suffering. The way Changmin felt at the moment, he would be a Buddha by the coming dawn.

Every single cell of his body hurt, down to the hair around his belly button. Slumped down on the couch in the living room, Min stared at the kitchen entrance, wondering who moved it so far away. His aching legs resented the distance. His growling stomach resented his legs.

Tokyo's moon was somewhere beyond the wall of lights and rain outside of the slender pane of glass that ran from the ceiling to nearly the floor. Changmin often strained to see the night sky, looking for a hint of black amid the wash of brilliance but the city was too flamboyant in her dress. There was very little quiet in the skies, especially in the evening when the Japanese seemed desperate to cram as much living into every second. It made for a very hectic noise in his life.

Min shook his head, working his fingers through the tangle of his hair. The tight braids done over his scalp pulled the skin too taut, and he'd nearly cried with relief when the stylist undid the cornrows. The Gods were sure to show him what suffering truly was, starting with the removal of his skin from the top on down. Changmin was fairly certain the braids were a divine sign for him to stop whining and push forward.

After all, pushing forward is what was expected of him.

There had been moments when he thought he would collapse, beaten down by the schedule or the rigors of their routines. Min battled for his health, taking care to eat and to sleep when he could. The drawn, paleness of Jaejoong's face often was enough of a warning sign for him. In recent days, he tried to shed the sullen selfishness he knew he harboured in his personality, often placing food directly in front of his older/youngest brother to implore Jae to take care of himself.

A healthy Jaejoong, curiously exotic and talkative, would become the spotlight again and their group would be balanced again. It was only natural, Min reminded himself, for all of Junsu's talk of charisma, it was their Joongie that drew the eye or the ear. The fans here encouraged the intimacies of the

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group, and Changmin once again became aware of his place as Go, the fifth member offsetting an ill-omened number.

Rubbing at his scalp, Changmin listened to the silence in the house. The others hadn't yet come back from the show. They'd be late, he told himself. If he saw them before morning it would be a surprise. Ordering his legs to hold his own weight, he stood, nearly losing his balance as his thigh muscles gave out under him. Steadying himself with a hand on the back of the couch, Min shuffled towards the kitchen, too tired and hungry at the moment to care about much of anything other than sleep and food.

The ice box held nothing that interested him and the pantry offered little more than dehydrated noodles and canned vegetables. Tossing a handful of somen into a pot of boiling water, Min used another saucepan to make a dashi broth, mincing slightly wilted green onions to throw into the soup. Scrambling an egg, he let the heat cook the strands as he dribbled the mixture into the heated broth. Tossing the rinsed noodles into a wide mouthed bowl, Changmin poured the soup over the somen then carefully carried his steaming food to the living room.

Falling into the sofa's soft cushions, Min sighed at the weight of his fatigue in his bones. The show went well. Or at least he thought it did. Yunho probably had other ideas but as far as Changmin was concerned, he held up his end of the performance. The warm broth would go a long way in soothing his aching vocal cords, and quell the roaring beast in his stomach.

Dipping a spoon into the broth, Min brought the fragrant soup to his lips, closing his eyes and murmuring in pleasure at the heat. The quiet of the house let him eat slowly and in peace, no rush to be somewhere other than the soft feather-top mattress in his room. Chewing on a mouthful of noodles, he heard his phone chime and ignored it, wanting to be left alone for the moment.

Adulthood wasn't everything he hoped for. He still was fighting with a growling jealousy in his heart. Not towards any of the members. He'd long forgiven Yoochun for stealing Junsu's heart and had begged forgiveness from Jae for the harsh, hurtful words he'd flung at the older singer. Their relationships had settled after the seething time of adjustment and things between the five were flowing evenly and happily.

"Then why is there an ache in my soul?" Changmin asked the empty room.

He was tired of being alone.

Pushing the noodles away, the young man raised his arms over his head and stretched out his back, hearing the pop of her spine as his muscles gave way under the motion.

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Watching the four become twos hurt. Not for lack of love from one of them but rather just the lack itself. The enormity of that realization hit Min hard. He was still too untried for his liking, no longer innocent in the ways of the world but with a burning desire to plunge headlong into life.

He'd always been one for knowledge, Min smiled as he dumped the remaining noodles into the disposal.

Min knew his lust for learning served him well. He used it to push himself into the limelight to become a part of the group. And again when he needed to alter his image, the cute and innocent persona deftly stolen by Junsu, Min worked to become the scholar, the too serious one with an occasional smile coaxed from one of the older singers.

When they'd first been told of the move to Japan, Changmin first thought of the waste of his scholastic endeavors, cursing that the university he worked so hard to get into had to fall to the wayside for his career. Relegated to the back of the group with a increasing attention given to a coyly placed and popular YunJae, Min searched for a way to become relevant, coming back again to his propensity for learning quickly.

He was the first among his group to gain fluency, diving headlong into words to explore their meanings. Jae followed along behind him. At first, Min wasn't sure if the older singer was a savvy manipulator or there was just something inside of the mercurial young man's brain that sparked alive when Jae needed something.

After spending years with Kim Jaejoong, Min discovered Jae worked hard at things in his own way, delving into social situations Changmin would never had dared. Jae would be the first one to ask someone on the street for directions, clarifying each word with a shy smile and a dab of his tongue along his lips. Sensual and erotic, Jaejoong was a study for Changmin who struggled with presenting a more aloof image.

Aloof and goofy seemed to work for Jaejoong. The juxtaposition of the two concepts boggled Changmin's mind. The mystery of its success made it a puzzle worth studying.

He could do mysterious. Min knew he leaned towards being quiet and he used that to his advantage, sitting back to watch the others as they gamboled through interviews and drove themselves to exhaustion during rehearsals. Relaxing among the members was easy. Alone with the five gave him comfort and security. He would need both during their time in Japan.

Despite his assertion that he was an adult, Min was still a young man that was much too far away from home. The members gave him the feeling of family. He came to rely on that feeling. It was the only sense of anchor he had at the moment.

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His phone demanded his attention again, chirruping loudly. Thinking it was one of the hyungs, Changmin picked it up, answering in a low drawl, teasing out the salutation.

“You were good tonight.”

It was a sultry purr. Min could hear the swagger in the man’s voice. Hell, his groin felt it as well.

“You saw us.”

“I saw you.”

Electricity poured into Min’s body, setting him on edge. Turning the phone away from his mouth so the other man wouldn’t hear him pant, Changmin took a deep breath before answering.

“How did you see us? It wasn’t televised.” Min licked at his parched lips, swallowing hard at the dryness in his throat.

“There was a live feed over here.” Another purr and the sound of a sip, the other man’s sigh of satisfaction from his drink. “I had to chase everyone out of the room so I could watch you by myself.”

Trailing a finger over his aching thigh muscle, Changmin struggled to keep his voice calm. “I’m not exactly the most charismatic on the stage. The others must have kept you much more entertained.”

“Ah, Minku,” The drawl caught on a dark hitch, erotic and thrilling. “You have no idea how entertaining watching you can be.”

“I don’t know what that word is.” The unfamiliar Japanese sounded like an endearment but knowing the other’s contrary nature, it could very well be something mocking. “Minku.”

“You’re saying it wrong.” The other man said it again, purring it out slowly. “The ‘ku’ should leave your mouth like you’re waiting for a kiss. And if I was there, I’d be glad to show that very delicious mouth of yours how to say it, Minku.”

“Why are you doing this?” Min blurted out.

“Doing what, pretty?” Changmin heard another sip, a quenching from across the ocean.

“Call me here and... saying the things you are saying.” The young man replied. “I don’t know why continue to tease me.”

“Teasing you? Or watching you gyrate on the screen? Did you know that with the right electronics you can slow a live feed or even stop it on a spot that is really interesting?” Listening to Min’s shallow breathing, the man continued. “I spent a lot of my time with the remote on slow. And my hand,



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well... let's just say that it was no where near that remote. I had better things to wrap my fingers around."

"You're insane." Min found his voice, stumbling over his words. His mind was nearly white with the images of the other man's hands roaming over a hard body. Reaching for the glass of water on the coffee table, Min took a tentative sip, almost choking when the other man let out a soft moan when he heard Changmin swallow.

The phone shook in Min's hand when the other spoke. "You have no idea how much I want to be whatever it is that you're drinking."

"Now I know you're insane." Changmin replied, keeping his voice light. "So you called just to tell me you watched our show?"

"I called to tell you I watched you." A heavy sigh rattled the other's voice. "I wanted you to know that."

"Thanks." Min said. "I guess."

He could do mysterious. Of course he could, Changmin reassured himself. He was doing mysterious now. He was being aloof.

Then why, the child in him mocked, did he feel like every nerve in his body was on fire and that he was about to jump into an endless abyss filled with more suffering than he could bear?

Because, the rational part of his brain responded, the man he spoke to was far more dangerous than anything or anyone he'd ever dealt with before. It was good to be cautious about falling for the sensual darkness the other promised. His heart was too young to be broken.

Bullshit, his body responded. Once again, his basest desires overruled any further discussion. It all came down to the carnal. No matter how enlightened he might want to be, his body always responded with what was a final argument.

*What the hell are we waiting for?*

Changmin had no answer for his body's prodding and his mind had gone strangely silent, as if protesting being vetoed by his flesh.

"You still there, Minku?" The other asked softly, hearing the young singer's breath catch. "There you are. I was wondering if you fell asleep on me. Not that you falling asleep on me would be a bad thing. I'd just prefer you doing that with me underneath you and not thousands of miles away."

"We're only a little over 700 miles apart. Not thousands."

"It seems like we're thousands of miles away when all I'm left with to stare at is a television screen frozen with your half-naked body on it."

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Changmin's soft intake of air brought ice into his lungs and Min could swear he heard the other smile through the phone line. His breath was nearly steady when the man purred with a silky nonchalance that unnerved Min to his core.

"When you dance and lift your arms, there was a slice of your skin peeking out from under your shirt." The other man inhaled, the familiar sound of a cigarette being lit and a drag being taken from its end. "The first time it happened, that's when I had to chase everyone out of the room."

"The second time it happened," The silk became velvet, a rough lick of a tongue on Changmin's fraught nerves. "I had to stop the frame and..."

He let his voice trail off, hoping the younger man would follow the thought. "Do you know how long it took me before I could breathe again, Minku? Before I could even trust myself to walk again?"

"No." Min whispered, not trusting himself to speak. A rush of heat enflamed Changmin's face, his nipples hardening beneath the thin cotton shirt he'd pulled on once he got home.

"They should make you lift your arms more often, Minku." The man said. "Or better yet, I could lift them for you. The television screen doesn't taste as well as I imagine you taste. Do you taste good, Minku?"

"I don't know." Min's voice lowered, a rolling husky sound in the other man's ears. "I can't...you..."

"I sit here sometimes and think about how you taste. Especially after tonight."

"To me you look like you could taste like unsipped sin." The other said, not giving Changmin's brain time to recover before it was thrown into a maelstrom of unbidden sexy thoughts. "I want to teach you how to sin, Minku."

"I know about sin." Min replied hotly. He wouldn't admit to being too innocent, especially not to the man on the other side of the phone.

"You think you know because you read and watch." The other man sounded amused, low laughter turning his tone into an erotic splash. "But you won't know sin and temptation until you have someone to teach you. Someone who knows what sin feels like. Someone who knows how to draw out temptation until you can't think."

"And I'm the one to teach you those things, Minku." Another purr and the hint of a kiss at the end of the unfamiliar word. "You should learn about how hoarse your voice can get from screaming with pleasure, not just from singing. Your body should hurt in places that even your dancing can't touch. There are parts of you that should throb, parts that are deep inside of you that I would take my time exploring."

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“You need to be taught those things, pretty.” The other man said. “You should learn those things underneath me, Minku.”

“I need.. to go to bed.” Changmin needed to sleep. Fatigue bored down into his limbs and sand crusted over his eyelids but he knew he would end up staring up at the ceiling, his hands moving over his bare stomach and thinking about the other’s fingers and mouth on him.

“You run off then, Min-min.” The other laughed. “Think of me before you go to sleep. Dream of me when you finally do get to sleep because I’ll be thinking of you. I’ll be thinking of wanting you. Of having you.”

“I’m not running off.” Changmin refuted. “I just need...time to think.”

“I’ll give you that time, Minku.” The other whispered, hot and wet in Min’s ear. “But not too long. Japan, as you say, isn’t that far away. And I don’t want to let anyone else sip at the sin that you have hidden under that placid, quiet mask of yours.”

“Good night, Min-ah.” He took another hit off of his cigarette, a rushing sound loud in Min’s ear. “I hope your dreams of me keep you awake for a very long time.”

“Good night, Dong-wook.” Closing his phone, Min sighed, his parting words unheard through the broken connection. “And I want to sin with you. I just don’t want to lose myself doing so.”

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# 2

The hard wooden floor felt deliciously cool against Min's overheated body. Closing his eyes, he lay and let the ache work up from his feet to his shoulders, mentally releasing the pain through his upturned palms. Another deep breath was nearly enough to take out the first wave quivering through his body. The third breathe, deep into his chest and held until it burst through his belly, equalized the pressure he felt pushing in from the outside.

"Here." Yunho's voice slid through the fractures of Changmin's calm, an icy touch of wet on his bare shoulder. Cracking open one eyelid, Min couldn't help but grin at the offer of a chilled bottle of electrolyte water. It was a struggle to sit up but Min allowed himself to be lured into it by the cold drink, Yunho setting himself down beside the youngest of the group.

The others continued to work through their routine, a complicated weaving dance step that seemed nearly impossible for Jaejoong to grasp. A slender female choreographer led the elder singer through the dance, sliding in behind him to guide along, a slow light to draw a fluttering moth.

"I think he's almost got it." Min used his chin to indicate Jae, twisting the cap of his drink open. "Now Yoochun is tangled in with Junsu."

"I don't think that's an accident." Yunho's deep voice rumbled with a flat humour. "Yoochun's hands aren't where they should be."

Changmin spotted Chunnie's fingers grazing the small of Junsu's back, lifting up the edge of the other's shirt as he moved by. Junsu pursed his mouth in frustration at the touch, pulled out of his concentration by his lover's caress but fighting to contain a smile from the pleasure it gave him. The dance instructor on the other side of Jaejoong saw none of it, her attention fixed on the lanky singer.

"His hands are probably where Junsu really wants them." Min said slyly, taking a sip of his water.

Yunho glanced at the young man under hooded eyes. Changmin had grown up while Yunho wasn't looking, stretching upward in body and outward in his mind. Taking a sip at his own drink, Yunho merely murmured a soft indistinct reply.

"Hyung, you're fairly... wise about things like love. Or at least where to put... the parts of your body that want love." Min's off-handed comment made the water spurt from Yunho's mouth and up through his nostrils.

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“Ah! Min!” Yunho wrinkled the bridge of his nose, scrubbing at his dripping nostrils with the flat of his palm. “Warn me when you’re about to say something stupid so I can prepare myself.”

“You don’t think you’re...” Min searched for the proper word. “Experienced? I would have thought that with everything that Jaejoong has put you through over the past few years, you would be the perfect person to ask about a few things.”

“If you want to know how to drive Jaejoong crazy,” Yunho cocked his head, a quirk of his lip giving his smile a jaunty sneer. “Then I can talk to you about that. But if you were to try any of that, then we’d be looking for another high vocalist. Either that or you’ll be singing higher than you ever thought possible.”

“No, no.” Min made a face. “Jaejoong is too complicated. I sometimes think he has two separate personalities that live inside of his body and they switch just to tease us. I just wanted to ask you about...”

“Come on, let’s take this outside.” Yunho stood, dragging the youngest up with him. “I’d pay more attention to you there. And it sounds as if you need my full attention.”

Horns blathered through the streets, cabs whipping past the two young men as they stepped out to sit under the wide awning outside of the dance studio, a flight of cement stairs wrapping up around the building to the empty back offices. A fried oyster kiosk did a brisk business on the corner, the tantalizing aroma of ponzu sauce and seafood calling to Yunho’s hunger.

“I should have brought money with me.” Yunho groaned aloud. “The smell of food is going to drive me crazy. Talk to me, dongsaeng. Who’s got you thinking about love?”

“Not love.” Changmin corrected with a shake of his head. His dark eyes were watchful, absorbing the motion of the traffic winding slowly past. He saw nearly every face, studying the varied expressions and wondered briefly at the lives walking by. These people had lovers and longings. Some wore their worries openly on their faces, others shuttered any shred of personality behind a hardened shell.

“More... lust.” Min listened with satisfaction at Yunho’s intake of breath. He enjoyed throwing the older man off his stride. “Love. I see the four of you every day. Love isn’t something I need to talk about.”

“You’re...”

“Too young to think about lust?”

“No, not that.” Yunho shook his head. “Lust is something for frivolous people. You are never that, Minnie-ah.”

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“Of all the worldly passions, lust is the most intense. All other worldly passions seem to follow in its train.”\* Min quoted at the leader. “Passion of any kind is just a fractured reflection of lust. Even a solemn person can be shallow.”

“Min, that you can come up with a quote for lust shows me that you’re not frivolous.” Yunho leaned back on his hands, the gritty sand of the poured cement biting into his palms. “Were you thinking of anything specific or were you just asking about it in general?”

“In general.” Min contemplated. “What makes a man lust?”

“God, that’s like asking why we think.” Yunho responded. “Are you sure you’re human? You’re telling me that you’ve never lusted for something before?”

“Not something. Someone.” Min explained. “And why would someone lust for someone else? I want to think that it is something chemical that is invoked if there are certain triggers or scents but there’s something inside of me that believes it goes deeper than that.”

“I think lust is harder than love.” Yunho nodded at Min’s mocking snort. “No, it is. Lust is hard to maintain. It fades so quickly. Ah, I’m not good at explaining this.”

“Explaining what, Yunnie-ah?” Jaejoong mounted the stairs towards where the pair sat, drops of rain washing some of the sweat from his face. He carefully sat down between Yunho’s feet, leaning against the other man, using Yunho’s legs as a back rest. To a casual observer the touch would appear casual but the swell of black in Yunho’s pupils said something else.

“Dongsaeng asked about the difference between lust and love.”

“Not the difference, hyung. The why of lust.” Min corrected. Leaning forward, he brought his face down closer to Jae. “I don’t think Yunho knows a lot about lust.”

“He knows ...” Jae’s face coloured as Yunho’s foot nudged the rise of his rear. “Let’s leave Yunho out of this.”

“Lust.” Jaejoong mused, leaning his head back against Yunho’s knees, his touse of black hair spreading over the other’s bended legs. “Lust is when you see someone and say, I want to taste him in my mouth.”

Changmin swallowed at the inference, Seven’s words echoing Jae’s sentiment.

He’d not heard from the older singer in days and wondered if the pursuit was over before it had ever truly began. Then a text message on his phone greeted him during breakfast. A murmur of needing to find someplace warm to put cold fingers. Min remained at the table long after he’d eaten, unwilling

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to be seen with the press of his body against the thin fabric of his night shorts.

“Yunho, go help the other two.” Jae leaned forward, reaching back to tug at his lover’s shin.

“If you want to talk to Min privately, you can just say that.” Yunho mumbled against the back of Jae’s head.

“Go. I want to talk to Min alone.”

“I’ll tell them to hurry and learn what they need to so we can go home and get some food.” Yunho groaned as he stood up, stretching out his legs. “Don’t be too long.”

Jaejoong waited until his lover passed around the corner, sliding up to the step where Changmin sat. Pursing his lips, he contemplated the younger man with an assessing look.

“Don’t look at me like that, hyung.” Min protested. “I just was curious.”

“You’re never just curious, Minnie-ah.” Jae commented. “There is always a reason for your curiosity.”

“Sometimes, my reasons should remain private.”

“They could but they won’t.” The other reminded Min. “We’re too tightly woven for anything to remain private for long.”

“I might want it to be private.” Changmin replied.

Everything he did was definitely out in the open. He woke up to find others breathing in his space and went to sleep with the press of others’ thoughts in his head. Not for the first time, he wondered if he couldn’t just rent a small closet somewhere for a few hours each day just for the quiet of his own thoughts.

“And this is about lust?”

“It’s about a lot of things.” Min agreed. “Mostly, it’s about my wanting to try out... tastes. I think I’m old enough. I’m no longer a wide-eyed child that everyone needs to protect.”

“You were never that child, dongsaeng.” Jae said softly.

That was the last thing Changmin wanted; to be perceived as a child. He fought that every day. Every single moment of every day. Until he joined the group, he’d been the eldest. He knew that role. Embraced it. Now he was the youngest and it fit poorly on his shoulders.

As the group evolved and each of them settled comfortably into their routine, Min quickly discovered he lost the identity that had been constructed for him. He was supposed to be the cute one. The innocent.

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Once more, not a comfortable fit. He hated pretending that he sat in a field of sugar daisies and dreamed of pink unicorns.

Changmin wanted to dream of sloe-eyed men with dangerous smiles. And wicked mouths promising long nights of heat and satiation. Min wanted to be the man that would draw that. But how to go about being that person was something that eluded him.

“There is someone that...” Min puffed out his cheeks and blew the air from his lungs, cleansing his body. “He calls and sometimes we talk about things that leave me feeling like my skin is on too tight. As if when I go to move, I would split open and all of my guts would spill out of my body.”

“I don’t want forever with him.” Changmin whispered. “I don’t think he’s someone that thinks about next week much less about love and eternity. I know this. I don’t want that either. It’s too soon in my life to find the person that I want to die next to.”

“It’s never too soon for that.” Jae commented darkly. “You have the right to be as miserable as I am sometimes.”

“Love just seems like a waste of energy.” Min laughed. “I watch the four of you and you spend so much of your lives hiding who you love and how you care. And then on top of trying to fit yourself into a relationship that none of you really know how it works, you have to learn how to maneuver your body into pleasing the other person.”

“I don’t want to learn how to make love at the same time I’m learning to love.” The youngest explained. “I want to experience the sensations of my body without having to worry about my heart.”

“Do you want to know what I think?” Jaejoong asked softly.

“Yes. I always care about what you have to say, hyung.”

“I think you believe that love is a burden and not one that you want to carry.” Jae’s bright eyes shone in the soft watery daylight coming down through the rain. “I understand that. I do. But I think you will be missing so much if you don’t love as you explore inside of yourself for the answers that you’re looking for.”

“Everything changes when you love the person you’re with, dongsaeng.” Jae said, resting his hand lightly on Min’s arm.

“I’m not saying that I won’t love.” Min replied. “I just don’t want to love right now.”

“Okay.” The eldest licked at his lower lip, a sure sign he was thinking. “What happens if you fall in love with this person that you lust for? Does he...wait, is it really a he?”



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“Yes.” Min nodded. “He’s someone that I know. And I am not going to fall in love with him”

“Does this mysterious he lust after you?”

“Yes, he’s told me so.” Changmin afforded himself a small sigh, thinking of the dark crawl of want in Seven’s voice the last time they spoke.

“And you are sure that he won’t fall in love with you?”

“I’m not someone that has others fall in love with him.” Changmin let out a yelp of protest when Jaejoong struck his leg with a clenched fist. “Ow! I’m being truthful. I don’t have the charisma to pull anyone in. And I don’t want that anyway. Not now.”

“Plenty of people would fall in love with you if they just saw you, Minnie-ah.” Jaejoong admitted. “Don’t say things like that.”

“You defend me because you love me.” The youngest quickly swiveled his hips, taking his leg out of reach of Jae’s hand. “I just want to... explore, Joongie-ah. I want to see what’s inside of me. To understand why someone drives me insane until I can’t think and then someone else just leaves me feeling as if we are good friends. I want to know what it’s like to lose myself in pleasure.”

“Promise me that you’ll take care of your heart, Minnie-ah.” Jaejoong whispered. “Please.”

“I will.” Min poked at the other’s cheek with his finger, dimpling Jae’s porcelain skin.

Jae moved to hug the youngest, his arms nearly embracing Changmin when the young man’s phone burst into song from its place in Min’s pocket. Grinning, Jae gave Min the barest of kisses on his forehead before loping down the stairs, ostensibly giving Changmin the privacy he needed and deserved.

“Minku.” The voice as velvet again, hot silky midnight despite the cold of the rain. “Are you busy?”

“I...uh.” Min stopped talking when Yoochun popped his head around the corner and stared up the steps. The baritone’s predictable nature meant Yoochun would more than likely climb the steps to harass Changmin as he spoke.

“You have company.” Dong-wook sounded displeased to Min’s untrained ear.

“Chunnie-ah.” Changmin waved the other member off, pointing to the phone and asking for five minutes with a wave of his hand. “We’ve just finished rehearsal.”

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“I’m just going in to mine.” Seven said, the sounds of people working loud echoing through the phone lines. “I thought I would give you a call. Something to make me hard. It helps me dance better.”

Blushing, Min dropped his face down, not wanting the now overly curious Yoochun to see his red face. “Yunho was right. He said lust was for frivolous people.”

“Are you saying I’m frivolous?” Seven asked, playfully mocking in false outrage. “I’m very serious. I take lust very seriously. How else can your lover enjoy it?”

“I’m...not your lover.” Min corrected the other, keeping his voice down to a soft murmur. “I have to go. The others will come looking for me.”

“I’m not your lover yet, pretty.” Seven said. “I’ll call you when I’m done with dinner. I have to go to a thing. Are you going to be up?”

“Yes.” Min squeezed his eyes shut, remonstrating himself for agreeing to quickly. “Maybe. I’m tired. It’s been a long day.”

Someone shouted for Seven, loud and close enough for Changmin to hear. “I have to go as well, Minku but I want you to remember something for when we talk again.”

“What’s that?” Min swallowed. The last instance Seven told him to remember something, it kept him up nearly half the night with the possibilities of where the older man would leave his first love bite.

“I want you to remember that yet I said because I am going to become your lover.” Seven’s chuckle held a ripe promise in its fullness. “And that the next time I see you, I’m going to spend a lot of my time and energy making you scream my name.”

“So Minku, do me a favour and repeat after me, man’etsu.”

“Man’etsu.” Changmin rolled the word over his tongue. “What does that mean?”

“It’s what I’m going to bring you to once you finally give up running away from me.” Seven promised. “And I’m going to enjoy bringing you there. I will talk to you later, little Minku. Wait up for me. The last thing I want to hear tonight before I go to bed is you panting into the phone.”

# 3

### *Months Ago*

The party was going late, Min sighed. He'd lost the others nearly four hours ago. It must be a burden to be so charismatic that one was dragged about like a new puppy, Changmin thought to himself, you would never get the chance to stand outside on a balcony over Seoul nursing a warm glass of soda and listening to the brash, thumping music churning from inside of a penthouse suite.

"They truly do not know what they are missing." Min turned his back on the party and its noise, leaning his elbows against the high railing.

Seoul sparkled under a pitch black sky. Off in the distance, it ran along and around the mountains, dark jutting lengths of stone in a river of light. Up high above the street, Min heard only the rush of the wind, under the blaring noise of the sound from the party. He could imagine living in the penthouse, a serene vastness of glass and polished wooden floors set above a distant city.

"What are you doing out here?"

Min didn't need to see who spoke to him. The man's voice had become overly familiar to him in the hours he'd been trapped in the zoetrope of a party. It was his voice that Changmin heard ad nauseam all night.

There was a power to that voice, sensual at times but mostly a smooth trail of sound that drew one's attention. Min was nearly sick of hearing it.

"Hyung." Min spared Seven a glance, the briefest of courtesies acknowledging the older man.

"You're not inside promoting our cross-label friendliness." Dong-wook leaned with his back against the metal rail, his arm nearly touching the slender young man staring out at the city below.

"The hyungs are very good at doing that." A short nod asserted the truth of his words although Seven saw a flicker of something in the younger man's eyes. "Shouldn't you be inside? It is your release party. They will miss you."

"Let them." Dong-wook dismissed the party with a casual wave Min envied. The man's self-confidence rolled off of him in waves, a long lean body rippling as Seven moved.

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The boy...the young man, Seven reminded himself, was a curiosity to many in the industry. Introverted and quiet, Shim Changmin mostly kept company with the other members of his group at events, never more than a few feet from one of the older singers. He often skipped the parties thrown for other groups and singers or would distance himself from the festivities after a few hours, patiently and silently waiting for the others to exit and take him with them.

Studying the other man's face, Seven saw a steady intelligence in Min's dark eyes and the resolute set of his full mouth and square chin. Changmin's brow furrowed under Seven's inspection, the younger man's attention fixed on the skyline but he was growing increasingly uncomfortable under the other's perusal.

"I never noticed how pretty you were." Seven leaned over and whispered into Min's ear. The heat of Seven's words shocked Min and he turned, gaping at the other man. Changmin's startled face gave Seven a clearer glimpse of the man behind the quiet mask.

The jaded ennui cracked and fell away, peeling back to reveal the innocent-blushed beauty beneath. Where Jaejoong was the group's forbidden exotic, Changmin was its untasted androgynous delight. A promise of unbridled passion lay in the dip of boy's mouth, and the silkiness of his smooth skin left no doubt of his youth. The combination rushed a strong desire into Seven's belly, and he wondered at the taste of Min's lips, licking his own in anticipation.

Recovering, Min frowned, his shoulders straightening before he sipped at his drink. He willed his hand not to tremble as he brought the glass up to his lips but he was certain Seven noticed the tremor before he could keep from sloshing.

"I'm not the pretty one." Changmin replied after swallowing. "I left them inside."

"Ah." Seven didn't hear bitterness in the other man's words. Just a quiet statement of the truth. "You really believe that, then?"

The sidelong glance Seven earned in return was spiced with humour, a silent criticism of Seven's sanity. "You've seen Jaejoong, right?"

"Yes." Seven rubbed at the back of his head, mouth pursed in slight embarrassment. He'd run into Yunho's temper during a game show for paying too much attention to that particular tasty nibble. Seven was too smart to do that again, despite the chaotic temptation Jaejoong represented. "I don't think Jaejoong's available."

"And you think I am?"

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Seven had to admit the crook of Min's eyebrow was masterful. The gesture conveyed just the right amount of disbelief and censure. It gave the younger man's face a frosting of challenge over his prettiness.

"I think you could be." Seven slid a look over the young man's body, slowly taking in the lean powerful form with an assessing eye. "If you just let yourself."

"When you're done staring at the city, come back inside." Seven stepped away from the balcony and headed back to the party. "There are a lot of dark little corners that are just begging to be explored. I could show you my favourite."



The first phone call came nearly a week later.

Changmin blinked at the sound of his cell's ringtone. Peering at his clock, he mumbled at the time, only a few hours after midnight. Fumbling for the chirruping phone, he flipped it open, hoping it was one of the others who'd locked themselves out of the apartment again.

"Hello, pretty."

Swallowing his surprise, Min nearly choked on his own spit, rubbing at his face to clear some of the sleep from his eyes. He knew that voice. There was something familiar about it. Something that tugged at the questioning need in the crux of his groin.

"Hyung." Changmin cleared his throat. "Choi."

"Ah, I knew you would remember me."

"Do you know what time it is?" Min fumbled for his glasses, holding up the frames so he could see the soft glowing numbers clearer. No, he thought, the time didn't change. It was still three in the morning.

"I was just heading to bed." Seven said, cocky and assured in Min's ear. "Actually, I'm already in bed and for some reason, my mind wandered over to how you looked the other night. And I wanted to hear your voice."

"It's three in the morning." Min repeated, a husky grumble in his voice. "Are you insane?"

"Sometimes." Seven admitted. "Were you asleep?"

"Most rational people are asleep at three in the morning. Even some irrational people." Min fell back into his pillows, throwing his arm over his eyes. Cradling cell phone against his ear, he nested under the covers, trying to figure out why he was continuing the conversation. "What do you want?"

"You."

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The answer came too suddenly for Changmin to absorb. It sank into him in stages, starting with suspicion that the other man was teasing him to denial, afraid to even believe that there could be a kernel of truth in that one word.

“You are... crazy.” Min whispered.

“You don’t think someone could want you?”

“No.”

There, Seven thought. That was a truth spoken from Changmin’s soul.

“You’re very desirable.” Seven replied. “Truth is, I’ve been thinking about you ever since I saw you under that night sky. You left quite an impression on my mind...and you should have left an impression on my body but you left without coming to find me.”

“I’m not something to be played with, hyung.” Changmin’s voice trembled. “I’m not a toy.”

“What are you looking for, Minnie-ah? Forever?” Seven’s voice shimmered tears into Min’s eyes. “Are you so surrounded by true love that you are going to deny yourself even the simplest pleasures until your true prince comes along? Or is it princess?”

“I...” Min’s sleepy brain struggled with Seven’s words. “I don’t know. I don’t think it matters what sex someone is if you like them.”

“Does that like only include love or is it desire as well?”

“Because I’m telling you, Shim Changmin, I would love to spend a very long night licking at every inch of your body. From that little point of cartilage in the outside middle of your ear to exploring that delectable down of hair that I’ve been told is on the small of your back.” Seven murmured, listening to the young man’s breathing go shallow. “And I want to feel your tongue explore me right back.”

“Is this some kind of sick joke because Yunho warned you off of Joongie-ah?” Changmin retorted, keeping his guard up as he in turn, fought the rolling want hooking claws into his body.

“He told you about that?”

“You just confirmed it.”

“Ah, that’s the last time I underestimate you, iroppoi.”

“What does that mean?” Changmin cursed under his breath. His Japanese was no where near what he wanted it to be.

“I could teach you what it means.” Seven’s teasing voice promised more than a language lesson. “I would love to show you how to say it properly.”

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You know the best way for a teacher to discover if a student is saying a word properly is for him to place his finger on his student's tongue. I could do that for you."

"Once again, I'm thinking this is some sort of sick joke." Min refused to allow himself to fall into the desire taking hold of him. Seven was promising nothing more than a way to provide himself and his friends some laughs at Changmin's expense, probably in retaliation for Jaejoong's ignoring the other man's subtle advances.

"It's no joke, pretty." Seven grew serious, his voice deepening. "Jaejoong was just someone I looked at. Touched a little bit. I'd be a fool to cross Yunho's lawn."

"You are much more promising than Jaejoong, pretty Minne-ah." The older man continued. "There is something especially erotic about watching someone as beautiful as you opening up under my hands and mouth. And from what I can see, you aren't looking for someone to be with you forever. I'm guessing that you're standing on the outside of true love and thinking, I'm not ready to be consumed by another person but wouldn't it be nice to feel someone against me...or inside of me. Am I right, airashii?"

"Yes." Changmin felt his mind tumble down into the abyss, letting go of the anchors that held his reserved personality in place. Sighing with relief at the freedom to embrace the truth in his heart, Min whispered with a broken hitch of want into the phone. "I don't want love. I'm too young for love. I have too much to do in my life but I want..."

"I know what you want, Min." Seven purred, his words licking at Changmin's ear. "And I want to be the one to give it to you."

"Why don't you go back to sleep?" The older man suggested. "But do me a favour first."

"What?"

"Tell me what you're wearing to bed." Seven's husky chuckle thrilled Min, an uncontrollable shiver running through him. "Or better yet, why don't you take off what you're wearing so I can go to bed thinking of how I got you undressed."

"No." Changmin hissed, embarrassment turning his face hot. He longed to gain some control over the conversation. Taking a breath to centre himself, Min whispered back. "Maybe I'm not wearing anything already."

"Damn." Seven let out a low whistle, panting slightly. "That's definitely an image I want to take with me when I dream."

"I'm going to hang up now." Min suppressed the smile he felt tug at his mouth. He would learn to play at Seven's game, Changmin decided. If Seven was serious about chasing him, then Changmin would let himself be

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chased. The promise of exploring his awakening sensuality was too much of a lure for Min to pass up. "I want to go to sleep."

"Are you going to dream about me?" The other man asked.

"I might." Changmin admitted. "But I'm not making any promises."

"Ah." Seven murmured. "Would it help if I told you that I'm not wearing anything to bed? And that my body is quite taken by the sound of your voice. If you were here, you could see that."

"I'll take your word for it. Maybe I'll be around sometime to see. Maybe even touch." Changmin let go of the breath he held in his lungs, a hard pant releasing the tremor of his nerves. "Good night, Dong-wook."

"Good night, Minnie-ah." Seven laughed, hearing the desire running hot in Min's voice. "I'll talk to you later. And maybe soon, we can arrange that touching you. Because I would like that very much."



# 4

The serious ones always came to him, Min thought. The ones with glasses and a shy smile, holding out their autograph books after first bobbing a courtesy bow towards Yunho beside him. He knew that many would pass him over, stopping first at the leader... they nearly all stopped at Yunho... before continuing on to Jaejoong. It was a pattern that he knew well, and sometimes he would stare off into the line and try to guess the ones that would stop at his place. Min was rarely wrong.

To his right, Yoochun and Junsu were making noise. They were a boisterous couple, often falling into fits of laughter that no one ever truly understood. More than once, Changmin wondered if they shouldn't hold back any sugar from the pair. He worried for their livers and minds sometimes. Next to him, Jaejoong tapped at the edges of the photos he had been given, organizing the stacks into neat little piles.

The lead singer already wore his outward persona, the porcelain mask he used to distance himself from the throngs of loud people. It slid easily into place, protecting the tender heart inside. Changmin could feel Yunho glancing at his lover, wanting to lean over and touch Jaejoong to reassure him but the boring eyes of everyone around them would stop such a contact.

Discretion held Yunho's hand.

Min knew that it was an unwelcome companion in Yunho's life. Their leader would rather spend his life out in the open instead of skulking behind the shadows, dodging whispers and rumours. Jaejoong would rather die than jeopardize Changmin and the others. Min knew this and while he hurt for the couple, he felt warm at the love Jae had for him. He'd heard Jae say he needed the group as much as he need Yunho, loud and often when the elders used to argue behind closed doors. Those arguments had fallen off as they settled into their relationship. Min still felt that love from Jaejoong. Now he felt it from Yunho as well.

Unfortunately, he still heard the moaning and pleading for more through the thin walls. Sitting between the pair, Min's face ran hot as his thoughts wandered over to things he knew he should ignore.

Sometimes it was easy to look the other way. Other times, it was all he could do not to press himself up against the wall and wonder what it would

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be like to make those sounds. To have those needs crawl out of his belly and tell someone how much he wanted them.

Changmin thanked whatever gods he could for not being able to hear Yoochun and Junsu. They were too loud outside of the bedroom. He didn't want to imagine the racket they could make.

"Please?" Min looked up when he heard a young girl's voice. "Min-san?"

She stood in front of him, dressed neatly in a plaid skirt and ironed white blouse. Holding out one of his photos, she blushed, pushing her glasses up onto the bridge of her nose. The young woman carried a stack of notebooks, their covers dotted with drawings of small animals and scrawls of class notes across the brown clapboard backings.

He duck his head in apologies for not noticing her sooner, ashamed he'd allowed his thoughts to wander into a carnal wasteland rather than paying attention to the event.

Changmin enjoyed the signings. He felt no need to rush and could spend time with each person, talking about what interested them and what songs they liked. The line for his place was never overwhelmingly long, not like Yunho's. Although some time Min wondered if they stopped at Yunho's place because they were paying respects to the leader and not just the person.

It passed too quickly. A few hours and then they were being rushed off to some place else, a studio where he would sit in the back behind Jaejoong and Yunho, out of the way and unable to intercept the pair's more overt groping. That suited Min just fine. There were times when he wondered if he shouldn't just step back and let them at one another. Yunho's glare often stopped that thought. The leader could read his mind if not his face.

The stylist gave him an assessing look, and he neatly sidestepped her. If he could avoid her, she would pull his hair into a pony tail instead of those damned braids. The makeup lady called him over, sympathetic to his plight. Hurrying to the chair, Min slid into the soft-backed director's chair, breathing a sigh of relief.

"How is the Min today?" Her softly accented Japanese was a bit hard for Changmin to follow. Coming from one of the Southern regions of the island, she spoke a vastly different dialect than the one he was trying to learn. But she was sweet and tucked cookies into his jacket for later.

"I'm fine, obasan." He tried out the word.

"Ah, good word." She nodded, the gold chain leash of her eyeglasses chiming as she moved. "Also you can use hakubo. That is what we use where I am from."

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Changmin made notes, drawing out the word phonetically and then asking her help for the lettering. He studied her hands as she wrote, noting the stroke pattern then numbering the lines so he could practice later.

“Thank you, obasan.” Min stood and bowed deeply, pulling at the cloak protecting his clothes. “You help me more than you know.”

“You are welcome, Min-kun.” She shooed him from the chair, motioning for Jaejoong to sit down. “Come, let me see if I can make you prettier.”

Changmin scoffed as he passed the older man, dodging Jae’s playful punch at his shoulder. “See if you can make him uglier. I am tired of standing next to him. No one sees me or Yoochun.”

“Speak for yourself!” Chun shouted from the stylist chair, wincing as she brushed out the tangles of his hair. “I am the handsomest!”

“Maybe if someone has their eyes closed.” Junsu teased, moving his legs as his lover kicked out at his shins.

All of the chairs were taken, the other members reclining and allowing the staff to work on their hair and makeup. Taking advantage of the distraction, Changmin stole outside, looking for some place quiet to read. He would have to speak for the group today, the hard work on his Japanese paying off. Finding a secluded alcove, Min curled up in a wide armchair, flipping through his notebook and sounding out the words he was still shaky on.

A chirrup stilled his mind, freezing his thoughts with an icy anticipation. Inhaling hard, Min debated letting the call roll into voice mail, unsure if he was up to dealing with the man on the other end of the line. Biting down on his full lip, he chastised himself for being a coward.

You can do this, Shim Changmin; he told himself sternly. This is just another man. Yes, he is more experienced but you wanted to explore this.

Besides, the thought of Se7en being his first lover was something that thrilled Min down into his bones. The other man’s dangerous, sultry advances were a potent sip of wine on Min’s tongue. Changmin wanted to drain the cup Se7en offered and hold it out to ask for more.

“Hello.” Min forced himself to sound steady, nonchalant as if Se7en’s call meant nothing more than a connection with a friend or perhaps even a distant cousin who he’d not heard from in a few months.

“Minku.”

Blessed if there wasn’t a world of sensuality wrapped in that one word. Min’s innards melted and his body tightened at the sound. Swallowing, the young man continued.

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“I know what that means now.” Min said softly, nearly accusingly. “Itachi. Why don’t you use that one instead?”

“Because itachi doesn’t leave your mouth pouted for a kiss.” Se7en poured heat into Min’s ear, savouring the shuddering catch of the younger man’s breath. “And I know you. You like a challenge. Itachi would have been too easy to look up. And I like the sound of minku better. It suits you.”

“Do you know what a mink is, pretty?” Se7en asked, leading Min’s thoughts around the subject.

“I do. It’s a small weasel creature they use for fur.” Changmin flipped a page in his notebook, his pencil tracing out letters he needed to practice. After a few moments, he stared down at the page, castigating himself for writing Se7en’s name in small block letters over the blue lined parchment.

“Ah, they are beautiful creatures and very pushy when something comes into their territory.” Se7en remarked. “They also purr when they’re happy. I’ve not heard you purr yet, Minku. I want to, you know. Hear you purr.”

“It would be even nicer,” The other man’s voice dropped, alluring dark and seductive. “If I were the one to make you purr.”

“We’re about to go have an interview.” Changmin warned Se7en. “I don’t need you to get me all worked up so I forget my Japanese. I need to do this right.”

“Ah!” Se7en’s tone shifted, sympathetic to the young man’s plea. “Are you worried that you’ll make a mistake?”

“Yes.”

To Se7en’s ear, the word sounded so forlorn. A lonely drop of sound in an ocean of ambition and want.

“You’ll do fine, Minku. I have faith in you.” The older man said. It was a comfort laid over Min’s shattered nerves. Sighing, Se7en sat back, making himself comfortable. “The others have faith in you too. Why don’t you have it in yourself?”

“I’m not good enough at this yet.” Changmin insisted. “My language skills aren’t as solid. Jaejoong is nearly as good as I am and he doesn’t even try. I swear he picks it up out of the air while I have to work extra hard just to get the pronunciation right.”

“His tongue is more limber than yours. Something I intend to change once I’m close enough to touch you.” Se7en teased. “And Jaejoong will never be the group’s spokesman. That lies with you and Yunho. Jae is too erratic. One never knows what will come out of his mouth. When you speak, it is thoughtful and steady. The sign of a good leader.”

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“I am not the leader.” Min reminded him.

“No not of the group, but Yunho does look to you. He looks to you to lead. Jaejoong is his counterpart but he looks to you to help guide the members.” The older man replied. Changmin heard the flick of a lighter on the other side of the phone line and the pushing rush of a cigarette being sucked on. “Yunho turns to you sometimes and expects you to fill in. I’ve watched him do it. It’s nice to see him have that trust in you.”

“You shouldn’t smoke.” Min murmured. “It’s bad for you.”

“How did we go from how you are to what is bad for me?” The other asked. “You can’t divert me that easily, Minku. I’m not going fall for your luring me away from what I want to talk about. I know your games. You put me on the defensive so I have to justify why I do something. No, little one, this time, we’re talking about you. Get used to it.”



Yoochun fled the styling room, shaking out his arms to get the feeling back into his hands. No matter how long he did this, he still felt apprehension when he sat down in the hairdresser’s chair. After getting the weave done on his scalp, he now had nightmares of that woman’s face, her leering smile chasing him through a forest of combs and spray bottles.

Flopping into one of the comfortable arm chairs set along the hallway, Yoochun twisted his head around, working the kinks from his neck. Closing his eyes, he wasn’t prepared for the weight of the other man landing in his lap.

“Aish, you’re heavy.” Micky grinned, wrapping his arms around Junsu’s waist. The tenor merely quirked a smile at his lover, sitting sideways and flinging his legs over the chair’s overstuffed arms. Grabbing at Yoochun’s hands, Junsu wove their fingers together, a casual, intimate gesture they both loved.

“Is that Changmin I hear?” Junsu cocked his head, straining to hear the murmuring voice of their youngest member.

“I think he’s around the corner.” Yoochun agreed. “He’s talking to someone on the phone.”

“Lately, he’s always talking to someone on the phone.” The amiable singer’s thoughts raced. “Don’t you wonder who he is talking to?”

“No.”

“Ah, you have no curiosity.” Junsu teased. “I want to know. Suppose he has a girlfriends...or even a boyfriend. It’s wrong of him to keep things from us. We’re a group.”

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“Our Minnie-ah likes having secrets sometimes.” Yoochun reminded Junsu. His fingers trailed over the other’s waist, stroking at the powerful muscles along the singer’s back. Junsu’s eyes hooded at the touch, a rolling pleased murmur working in his throat. “When he’s ready to talk to us about it, he will. Besides, it might be someone we don’t know. Or someone he doesn’t want us to know. We would tear someone apart. He knows this. He’s not stupid.”

“I don’t think I’d want someone we didn’t know to be with Changmin.” Junsu’s mouth tightened. “And I wouldn’t want it to be Junho.”

“Okay, I don’t want to imagine Changmin with your brother.” The other man shuddered, shaking his shoulders. “I don’t need that image.”

“You don’t need any image of Changmin with anyone. Only me.”

“Understood.” Yoochun replied in English. He’d been working to get his fluency back, hammering at the harsh words to break off the tonal qualities of the Korean he’d been speaking for the past few years. “Only you.”

“Onry.” Junsu grinned, purposely slurring the word.

It had become a joke between them after Junsu tried to say *only* but it sounded more like *horny* to Yoochun’s ears. They’d fallen apart laughing, tears streaming down their faces as the others shouted at them from the front of the van to shut up. Since then, the mere mention of the word brought a cocky smile to Yoochun’s face and a threat of giggles twitched Junsu’s cheeks.

“It would be nice if he had someone.” Yoochun grew serious. “He’s too lonely sometimes.”

“He’s too serious all the time.” Junsu remarked. “Yunho is right. Our Min needs to remember that he’s young. He should laugh more. And not just because we make him laugh.”

“I think he laughs at us. Not with us.” The baritone wrinkled his face, blowing a raspberry against his lover’s neck. The ruffle of air made Junsu snort, ticklish to a fault. Pulling back, Yoochun stared up into Junsu’s face, happy for the joy he saw in the other’s eyes. “Jaejoong and Yunho will take care of it. You know they will.”

“Good.” Junsu nodded, leaning in to peck Yoochun lightly on the mouth, a quick kiss that could be construed as nothing more than a buss between friends. It was a small intimacy they allowed each other in public, not held to the rigid roles confining Jaejoong and Yunho. “But if it is Junho, I’ll kill them both. Gah, my brother! And Minnie-ah! No, that’s not right!”

“Your brother doesn’t like men.” Yoochun reminded him. “And he’s much too conservative to change his mind. Besides, isn’t Min good enough for him?”

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“Ah, Min is more than good enough for him.” Junsu nodded. “He’s not good enough for our Changmin. No one is. He’s our Minnie-ah. He deserves the best.”



“So you’re going to go on and be the best there?” Se7en asked softly, wishing he was there to stroke at the young man’s face. The tenderness in Min’s voice promised a delicious kiss from a velvety mouth, something he could use at the moment. “Hwaiting.”

Min’s short bark of laughter made Se7en smile. The young man’s assent came reluctantly, then stronger when Se7en asked him to repeat it with more conviction.

“Good.” The older man said. “How long do you have until you go on and what are you doing?”

“About fifteen minutes.” Min checked his watch. “We’re on an interview show. I think they want to ask us personal questions. Probably about what the difference is between home and here. I get tired of answering that one. How many times can I say the same thing in a different way?”

“Ah, I never get asked that question.” He replied. “You five are much more approachable than I am. You’re lucky. People gravitate towards the group. You all offer something different to the fans. And they adore you.”

“They do like the group, it seems.” Min agreed.

“No, say it after me.” Se7en repeated. “They adore Changmin.”

“Aish,” Min borrowed Yoochun’s favourite phrase. “No. You’re being silly. No.”

“We’ll work on that then.” He laughed. “So, answer me something.”

“What?” Min answered cautiously, his voice dropping to a murmur.

The butterflies in his belly were gone, chased away by the other man’s talk. Staring down at the paper he’d scrawled on, Changmin wondered why he ever thought his Japanese wasn’t good enough. Determined to show himself that he’d be clear and understandable during the interview, Min reminded himself that he’d mastered even the alternate forms of certain words and he would do fine, if only to spite his wavering thoughts.

“Did Jaejoong really steal your first kiss?”

“Oh.” Changmin blushed. Gods, he hated that response to his embarrassment. It flushed him to a near fever pitch and made his throat close up, unable to talk. “No, that was a joke. It was something we said during a show. It was suppose to be something of a lie.”

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“Ah, good.” Se7en’s rumble held a satisfied moan. “Do you still have your first kiss?”

“No,” Min replied slowly. “I gave it to Yunho.”

“Yunho?” Se7en bit back a curse. The leader always seemed to slide into places Dong-wook wanted to be.

“Yes.” Min admitted. “It was...it’s hard to explain.”

“Did you mean it?” Se7en asked. There was a flare of heat in his tone, a tightness that lay into Min’s belly and left the young man wondering if that was what jealousy sounded like.

The kiss was nothing more than Min’s way of showing Yunho the love the leader had for Jaejoong was not just sex but rather the love of souls. He’d been more than willing to sacrifice what he thought at the time was nothing more than a gesture. Now, hearing the edge in Se7en’s voice, Changmin wondered if he’d sacrificed too much for a result that would have come about on its own given time.

“No.” Changmin finally said, breaking a long silence. I don’t want Yunho in that way. He’s my older brother. “It wasn’t... I didn’t want him. He didn’t want me.”

“Not like you want me?”

Min’s heart stopped, stilling then tripping back into an unsteady beat. He’d never spoken of his desire for Se7en, not aloud and certainly never where the older man could hear. He wouldn’t do so now. It wasn’t something that he wanted to sit between them while he went on an interview. Min knew he would spend the entire time on air wondering how the other felt or reacted when he admitted he wanted Se7en to do things to him... to be inside of him or even, just to cup his face and lick at his lips until they were swollen from kisses.

No, he would not say anything to encourage Se7en.

“No, not like I want you.”

Min closed his eyes, tight against the horror of what he’d just said. Did he have no self-control where the other man was concerned? Swearing hard under his breath, Min struggled to gain control over the situation before he tumbled too far down.

“Good, I want you too, pretty. I want you so very much. Sometimes I can just taste you if I close my eyes and open my mouth. I imagine you taste like the wind, shifting and powerful but then a hint of a gentle breeze.” Se7en said before Min could repair the damage of what he said. “And as far as I’m concerned, Minku, that first kiss is still mine to take.”



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“You’re too far away.” Changmin reminded him, struggling to keep his voice on an even keel. “Not even you can kiss across an ocean.”

“I won’t have to.” Se7en replied smoothly. “I’ll be in Japan soon. I’m going to be there for a while, in fact. Probably not far from where the five of you live.”

“So, little one.” The older man spoke softly, a clear sensual threat to Min’s sanity. “I’ll be there to take that kiss that’s waiting for me. And from there, we can move on to other firsts. For now, just remember, that every time you lick your tongue, you’re just keeping that mouth that I want to do so much to moistened for me. Remember that, Minku. And good luck with your show.”

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# 5

Tokyo always covered Changmin with sounds and smells. From the cooking of take-out noodle kiosks to the burning tar odor of its many streets, the city had a certain perfume overlaid with a hint of something he had taken to identify as pure Japan. There was a spring greenness in the air. No matter how deep into the city he got, that mint found its way to him, a reminder that he was somewhere far from home.

As if he needed any more reminder than the chatter of perplexing language around him.

The rest of the day was his to spend as he liked. After a long grueling week spent shuttled from event to interview to shoot, Changmin didn't think he could stand another moment cloistered in the walls of the apartment. Too much of his life was spent trapped indoors for one thing or another and he longed for the simple peace of sitting at a café and watching people walk by. The spring rains had other things on its mind.

After a leisurely stroll through one of his favourite bookstores, Min settled in at a corner tea shop, its wide balconies overlooking the foot traffic half a level below. Glass walls kept his view clear, and he relaxed into the broad soft chair farthest from the patio entrance, setting his packages down.

Ordering a pot of Gong Yi Cha and a selection of biscuits, Min turned to stare at the people, resting his chin on his hand after he pulled his legs up.

When he was little, Min spent a lot of time daydreaming about people and their lives, often seated on benches while his mother and aunt shopped for hours. They always marveled at how quiet he'd been, so well-behaved and patient. Changmin was fine with that perception. He was more entranced with imagining where people were going or why they were with the person next to them.

Over time, his daydreams became more fanciful. The young woman in a yellow dress was meeting her lover, her hands fluttering and checking her hair, pulling at the strands until the glossy black locks rested perfectly against her cheek. Quick glances at her watch meant he was late. The lack of frown between her eyes meant he was always late. She was used to waiting for him but their love was still young enough that she wasn't upset about it.

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Min felt quite satisfied when a tall young man with a scattered look bumbled towards the pretty girl, bowing his apologies. Her smile lit up the plaza, or at least it did to Min's eyes. Love was a grand, wondrous thing.

It was a pity that he wasn't ready for it.

Changmin still felt foolish when he thought of his past infatuation with Junsu. He clearly could see now that he'd been an idiot to think the tenor harbored feelings for him. Even more of a fool for hurting Jaejoong in the process of declaring his undying love that fizzled out before it ever started.

"Never say things you are going to regret later, Shim." Changmin told himself, murmuring against the rise of his clenched fist. "Or at least say them to someone like hyung who'll forgive your stupidity without having his lover beat the shit out of you. Yunho should have beat me senseless for what I said."

The rattle of the teapot being set on the table made Min turn and he smiled at the waitress, bowing his head in thanks. Waiting until she left, he dropped the tea blossom into the tall glass mug and poured hot water over it, watching the leaves begin to absorb the steaming liquid and unfurl the flower. The tea's fragrant perfume mingled with the spring rain, a light jasmine complimenting the freshness in the air.

He returned to his staring at passer-bys, enraptured by the possibilities of the people around him. It seemed strange to Changmin that Japan was so close to his home but so far away in culture at times.

There were hardly any children. Not compared to home. And the ones he did see were scurried about or intent on walking quickly to get someplace else, no time taken to reflect on the surroundings or stare at the waterfall at the far end of the court. He would miss that if he were a child here. The need to sit apart and think was so much a part of who he was. Changmin couldn't imagine how frenetic his thoughts would be if he'd not been given the chance to let them rest.

Blindly reaching for the teacup behind him, Min frowned when his fingers closed over empty space. Curious if he'd moved the cup out of reach, he turned and stared up at the tall man leaning over the table, dark laughing eyes teasing at the sight of Min's scowl. The glass mug rested at the far end of the table, between Se7en's hands, his fingers spread as his palms supported most of his weight.

"Good afternoon, Minku." Drawing nearer to the younger man's pretty face, Se7en's breath brushed over Min's lips, the whisper of a kiss moving between the air. "I would give you a kiss for real but I think it might be too soon for that with you. How about if I just say, hello and join you for tea?"



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“Yunnie-ah?” Jaejoong padded out of the bedroom he shared with the leader. “Have you seen my *Must Listen* CD?”

The living room was empty, the glass door to the rear balcony left open enough to let a soft wind lift up the sheer curtains. Pulling back the panel, he poked his head out, grinning at the sight of his lover standing against the railing, the gentle rain soaking into Yunho’s thin t-shirt.

“Come here.” Yunho held his hand out, the drops striking his open palm. “Come stand by me.”

“If someone sees...” Jaejoong murmured, dropping his eyes.

He couldn’t believe he still felt shy around the man who knew him the best, the one who made him smile down into his soul. Under Yunho’s fingers and mouth, he saw the heavens and knew he’d grown with the touch of Yunho’s love.

The shyness was still something Jaejoong couldn’t quite shake.

Yunho liked it. He would miss the delicate blush on his lover’s face once the last of Jaejoong’s hidden scars healed over. Yunho also knew that nothing would match the joy in his heart on the day that Jae turned to him and knew that he was loved, without question and without reserve.

That day couldn’t come soon enough for Yunho, despite his fondness of the blush in his Boo’s cheeks.

Jaejoong took Yunho’s hand, weaving his fingers with his lover’s. The rain’s icy bite made him gasp, his stomach muscles involuntarily twisting inwards. “Yunnie-ah, it’s cold.”

“Give it time. It’ll warm up.” Yunho pulled Jaejoong over, cradling the other man in front of him, wrapping his arms around his lover’s waist. “Or better yet, let me warm you up.”

They stood against one another, hidden from the outside world behind a veil of rain and a curtain of faceless buildings. No one knew where they lived and the placement of the balcony gave them enough privacy to watch the city lights around them. Yunho treasured the balcony. Jaejoong was fond of the amorous feelings it seemed to dredge up when Yunho stood on it.

“What were you saying?” Yunho murmured against Jaejoong’s neck, licking at the small birthmark along Jae’s jaw.

“I can’t find one of my CDs.”

“Are you sure it’s your CD?” The other man teased. Jaejoong seemed to have a loose grip on ownership where things were concerned. He and the others had adjusted to Jae’s innocent avarice. They just knew that if they couldn’t find something, chances were good that it was in Jae’s possession.

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“Yes.” Jae’s pout begged for a kiss and Yunho complied, sucking on the other’s lower lip, leaving behind a dimple of bite marks. “It’s one of Se7en’s. He signed it for me.”

“Ah, that son of a bitch.” Yunho’s tone was flat, lacking any real heat but the sentiment was still there.

“Yunnie-ah.”

“What?” The other man shrugged, nonchalant in his disregard. “He’s a bastard.”

“He’s not that bad.” Jae shook his head. “He’s fun. You just don’t like him...”

“I don’t like him because his hands wander where they shouldn’t.” Yunho replied, tightening his arms around his lover’s waist. “I don’t have to like him. He’s got nothing to do with us. Hell, he’s not even in our stable.”

“He’s a friend.” Jaejoong leaned his head back, resting against Yunho’s shoulder. He stroked at his lover’s wrists, running his hands over Yunho’s sinewy forearms.

“I think Min might have it.” Yunho cocked his head, watching a seabird arc through the steel grey sky, circling about as it looked for food or a safe place to land. “I saw him with a stack of CDs earlier.”

“I’m worried about our Minnie-ah.” Jae sighed. “He’s been quiet lately.”

“How can you tell?” Yunho made a face at Jae’s mocking snarl. “He’s fine. I think he’s worried about falling behind in Japanese.”

“How can he fall behind?” The singer scoffed. “He’s farther ahead of any of us. He’s stupid sometimes.”

“He is a lot like you, actually.” Yunho was ready for Jae’s skeptical look. “He is.”

“How?”

“Changmin lacks self-confidence, even though he is very good at whatever he wants to do.” Yunho replied. “He works hard. And while you two have different personalities, you only open up when you’re around someone you trust not to hurt you.”

“You think things out too much.” Jaejoong complained, frowning slightly. “Minnie-ah is... smart. So smart.”

“You are too.” The leader whispered into Jae’s ear. “Just in different ways. Both of you are stubborn and won’t give up if you have your teeth into something. He just, thank God, not as tumbled around as you.”

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“No,” Jae agreed with a nod. Whispering under his breath, just loud enough for Yunho and the wind to hear. “I’m glad about that. He’s not...”

“As bruised.” Yunho finished, leaning around to kiss Jaejoong’s succulent mouth. “But you’re healing and well, our Minnie-ah is probably getting to the point when he’s looking to be bruised.”

“The phone calls.” Jae’s eyes narrowed. “You don’t think those are from his mother, do you?”

“Not unless his mother calls at two in the morning and makes Min’s voice drop low.” Yunho admitted. “I heard him when I went for some li hing mui for my throat. He was in the living room. I guess he didn’t want any of us to overhear.”

“What was he saying?” Jae turned in Yunho’s arms, curious. “Did you hear anything?”

“Jaejoong!” Yunho shook his head. “Privacy. He gives it to us. We should give it to him.”

“Aish.” Jae twisted until he rested once more against the railing, mildly disgusted at his lover. “You are worthless. I’ll have to get Junsu to listen in.”

“He should have his secrets if he wants them.” Yunho knew he already lost this argument. Jae’s innate curiosity was only rivaled by Junsu’s inquisitive mischievousness. Yoochun would just follow along with the other two. He had little to no sway in that department. Yoochun’s loyalties clearly lay with Jaejoong and Junsu in most things.

“Minnie-ah can have his secrets.” Jaejoong said. “I just want to know them too.”

“Leave him be, Jaejoong.” Yunho sighed, cradling his lover closer. “Let’s go inside and get you out of these wet clothes. You’re too cold. I want to warm you up more.”



“Where are we going?” Changmin winced as Se7en maneuvered his car around a lorry.

Dong-wook kept the low slung Supra in Japan, tucked into one of the city’s many full service garage. It sat there, waiting for its master to return, a quiet purring midnight blue piece of steel begging to wrap around curves and slide through Tokyo’s thick traffic.

Downshifting, Se7en glanced at his passenger, noticing with a grin the white-knuckled grip Changmin had on the armrest handle. He dropped the Supra’s speed down, letting the car coast through the off ramp’s incline. The

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thoroughfare led to another junction, a lean ribbon of concrete leading to the outer edge of the city district.

“Have you been to the docks yet?” Se7en asked.

“Yes.” Changmin nodded. “We did a photo shoot there.”

“You ever been there and just was a person instead of something being paraded around like a puppy?” Se7en liked the flash of fire in Min’s eyes when he said that. It gave him hope that there was still a stubborn young man lurking under Changmin’s placid, quiet mask.

“You can tell me to fuck off, you know.” Se7en said softly, listening to the shallow intake of Min’s breath. He’d left the stereo off, wanting to listen to the other man’s body and movements. Min fascinated him, a puzzle he would enjoy putting together and then taking apart again.

“I was taught not to disrespect my elders.” Changmin cocked his head, the dip of his eyebrow as sardonic as his remark. “My mother also told me it was easier on the stomach not to argue with senile old men. I have a lot of ancient uncles.”

“Ouch.” Se7en winced, cracking a broad smile. ‘Remind me not to piss off your mother.’

“You’d do better if you remember not to piss off her son.”

The Sumida appeared suddenly in front of them, a ribbon of water reflecting the sky and buildings. Pulling into a side parking lot, Se7en slid the car into park and shut the engine off, watching the younger man’s face open up with wonder.

He knew how Changmin felt. Se7en forgot how to breathe the first time he saw the streams of lights dance across the softly flowing river. Entire walls of colour rippled and formed on the water, sheets of reds, blues and greens bouncing down the low hanging cloud cover as it caught the sparkle of the city in its vapour.

Sliding back, Se7en hooked his arm around the back of Changmin’s seat, leaning in to whisper into the younger man’s ear. “I’m told the river looks like the aurora borealis. Can’t you imagine the sky looking like a river of rainbows?”

Changmin remained silent, in awe of the skyscape stretched out around them. The other man’s body warmed him, an unfurling heat catching his stomach on fire. Turning his head, Min stared into the other man’s dark eyes, their depths hidden in the muted light of the car’s interior.

“It’s gorgeous.” Changmin agreed softly. “I never understood why Jaejoong loved the river before. Do you think it’s because this is what he sees?”

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“I don’t know your Jaejoong well enough to speak about what he likes and dislikes.” Se7en laughed, a husky dark rumbling purr. “And I don’t care either. I only want to know about what you like...or dislike.”

“Tell me, Minku.” Se7en slid closer, his mouth nearly on Min’s cheek, brushing at the downy soft skin. “Tell me what you’ve done...and what you liked.”

“Done?” Min swallowed the squeak in his voice before it betrayed him. The other man was too close, too consuming of a presence in his mind. Still, Changmin refused to pull away, not wanting to give Se7en the satisfaction of seeing him bothered by the other man’s nearness. “What do you mean, done?”

“I know you’ve let Yunho kiss you.” A finger trailed along Min’s jaw, a steady spark to the gunpowder emotions Min kept damped down.

“I didn’t let Yunho kiss me.” Changmin’s chin rose, defiant despite his trembling. “I kissed him.”

“Ah,” Se7en responded with a nod and allowed his fingertip to drift, tracing out the younger man’s lower lip. “And how was it?”

“It was okay.” Changmin shrugged. If he let his mouth drop open, the tip of Se7en’s finger would be drawn onto the moistness of his tongue. It was tempting. And unwise. So unwise.

Min parted his lips.

And let Se7en’s finger slid in.

It was the smallest of tastes. Just a hint of masculinity caught on a tiny bit of skin but the heady explosion in Min’s throat and belly was more potent than any champagne or soju he’d ever sipped. The world’s darkness was held in the flavour of Se7en’s skin, sensual and salty, the promise of heat and sweat pouring over their bodies. Rounded, the shape of it fit into the cup of Min’s tongue and not for the first time, he wondered if other parts of Se7en’s body would be snug against the roof of his mouth and how different everything else would taste.

The feeling was too brief, abruptly ending as Se7en pulled his finger free, sucking at the moisture Changmin’s mouth left on his flesh. Bending forward, the older man cupped Min’s chin, pulling Changmin’s face up until they stared at one another. Min held Se7en’s gaze, refusing to let his eyes give way under the speculative stare.

“Are you sure you want to go down this road, Minku?” Se7en held his breath, wanting to delve deep into the succulent treasure offered in Min’s pout. “Because I can’t promise you that once we start, that I will want to stop until I’ve tasted everything you have to give. Maybe even discover things



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inside of you that you didn't even know you had to offer. I want it all, Shim Changmin."

"I know." Min nodded, unsure if he could hold his voice steady long enough to answer. "And yes, I know what I'm doing. I know what I want. I'm not asking for love, Choi Dong-wook."

"I won't give you love. But there's no reason I can't love you. Or show you how to love." Se7en admitted. Bending closer, Se7en allowed himself the smallest suckle on Min's ear, finding the curved point along the side caught his attention the first time he saw the young man on the balcony.

Gasping, Min went taut under the caress, his eyes fluttering closed as his fingers flexed, trying to find a grip on something solid, anything to stop the world from spinning around him. He found Se7en's shirt, tugging and working the cotton fabric around his hands as Changmin held on for dear life, sure he would pass out from the rolling sensations he was unable to absorb before another wave struck him under.

Pulling away before he went any further, Se7en's breath hitched hard in his chest and he blew lightly on the wet spot along Min's ear, drying the moistness with a nerve-shivering wind. Steeling himself, Se7en sat back and started up the car, drawing in a lungful of air.

"Let's get you home, Minku." Se7en whispered, hot desire pouring into his chest. "Before I have you right here."

"Agreed." Changmin licked at his mouth, unsure if he would even be able to stand. "Before I let you."

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# 6

The Supra's headlights cut into the alley's darkness, its rumbling engine a soft purr mimicking its owner's voice. Hidden from the street, the car sat idling, the two men inside quiet with their own thoughts. Shifting, Se7en turned in his seat, hooking one leg up over the middle console and stared at the young man sitting next to him.

"Talk to me, Changmin." There was no teasing in the older man's voice, just a soft request.

"About what?" Min didn't know where he could start.

Did he talk about how his stomach churned, tumbling about like the rapids of a river or that the pounding of his heart made his ears ring? Was he going to mention that he could still taste the other man on the flat of his tongue? And was he going to just blurt out to Se7en that he wanted to know what the edge of the other man's mouth would feel like against his throat? How did someone just say those things?

More importantly, how could he say anything without losing his control over his already trembling body?

"Are you cold?" Se7en asked gently. "You're shivering."

Of course, I'm shivering, you idiot; Min's mind screamed at the older man. Do you not see what you're doing to me?

"No," He said instead, a shake of his head denying the shuddering tremors running along his arms and thighs. "I'm fine."

The skies began to open up, large spatters of rain striking the Supra's windshield. Far off in the distance, rolling clouds struck the warm air coming off of the water. Streaks of lightning spiderwebbed through the night, fingers of light stroking at the dark until it surrendered its hold over the city. Waves of thunder fell, knocking away the calm tension between them.

Changmin jumped at the first boom as it rattled past them, his eyes wide with shock at the sudden sound. Soon another followed, closer and louder, shaking the windows. Se7en reached for the young man's hand, about to reassure Min that they were safe but stopped as Changmin leaned forward to watch the lightning eat away at the night, a breathless astonishment at the light show on his innocent, pretty face.

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He isn't afraid; Se7en realized with a tiny smile. I'm sure if I asked him to step outside with me to stand in the rain he would.

God, the sight of Changmin's body outlined by his rain-soaked t-shirt would make his heart stop.

Which would save time, really, Dong-wook cautioned himself, since the other four would kill me if I returned him to them sick and unable to sing.

"Here, Minku." Se7en worked his jacket off, sliding the leather coat over Changmin's shoulders. "Wear this to keep warm."

Min was about decline but when the warm leather settled over his body, he leaned into it, allowing Se7en to hold the sleeves up so he could slide his arms in. Closing his eyes, the young man inhaled deeply, drawing in the other man's scent and holding it in the depths of his lungs.

Se7en smelled like five-star anise with a hint of honey, Changmin decided. An erotic and supple fragrance, it blended well with the tea-based cologne the older man wore on his skin. His tongue swelled with the want of Se7en's taste. The little sip from the other's finger was much too brief, much too small for Changmin's desires. The ravenous monster he'd awakened in his belly wanted more. So much more.

The older man's nimble fingers worked the ends together, zipping the jacket closed over Min's slender chest. Unable to resist, Se7en let his hand brush against Min's chin before pulling away, leaving a searing burn in the young man's tightened nerves.

"Is that better?" Se7en asked.

Changmin's mind screamed, mewling and twisting around Se7en's murmur, a feline winding about the man's body. Swallowing, Min replied flatly. "It's fine. Thank you."

"You never call me by my name."

"What?" Min swallowed, unsure if he could meet the other's eyes, his face nearly hidden by the jacket's upturned collar. Se7en surrounded him, nearly too much to bear. He wasn't certain that his nerves could handle much more of this.

But neither did he want to step out of the car. Of course, Min said to himself, I'm not sure I can stand at the moment. How would it look if I fell flat on my face in the pouring rain?

"I noticed that you don't call me by my name when we're together." The older man wrapped one arm around his upraised leg.

"You call me Minku." Changmin snorted. "What do you expect me to call you? Nanatsu? Shichi?"

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“Either,” Se7en shrugged, folding down the collar of his jacket so he could see the other man’s face. “You studied my name. That’s cute.”

“It’s a part of learning Japanese. Don’t flatter yourself.” Min responded, shoring up his bravery. “Maybe I should call you Josai. That suits you.”

“I’d rather you call me Iro.” Se7en whispered, drawing in close.

The young man pulled him in, a complex blend of adult and youth, just begging to be brought fully over and explored. From the trembling of Min’s body to the wide-eyed innocence in his luminous brown eyes, Se7en knew he wanted to taste everything Changmin hid from the world. His Minku was too much of a delicacy not to be savoured. He would have to take his time and allow Min to set the pace.

Although, Se7en admitted, swallowing at the rawness in his throat, if Min licked his mouth once more, he was just going to let himself go and see where it led.

And damn if the boy didn’t moisten his lips with his tongue, Se7en swore.

Damn it to fucking hell.



Yoochun dashed behind Junsu, his sneakers splashing up waves as they ran through the puddles. The movie ran later than either had expected, more so because they’d tucked themselves into the balcony and failed to notice that it had restarted again until Yoochun looked up from his inspection of Junsu’s swollen mouth and realized that he’d already seen the lead actress kill one of the villain’s lackeys before.

Possibly even twice.

The rain outside was no surprise to the pair. They’d been in Tokyo long enough to appreciate its fluctuating weather but neither was prepared for the deluge that pounded at their hunched over shoulders. With their apartment building a few blocks away, they chose to run for it, often stopping to turn their faces up to the rain and let the cold water pour over their bodies, shivering when it soaked through their thick jackets and onto their too hot skin.

“Aish, it’s like winter.” Yoochun bumped into Junsu as the other man dodging a newspaper stand. “Ah, home! We can be warm again.”

“I left you plenty warm in the theatre.” Grinning, the tenor nudged his lover with an elbow, ducking under the wide awning in front of their building. Shaking off the excess water in his hair, Junsu shed his scarf, wringing it dry.

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“I think they would have chased us out eventually.” Yoochun made a face. “I’m not even sure if they ended up killing the bad guy or if he won.”

“It’s a Japanese drama.” Junsu woefully shook his scarf again, dismayed at the amount of water still left in the absorbent fabric. Twisting harder, he said. “They all died. Even the villain. And the dog.”

“No!” Yoochun scoffed, his mouth an open hiss. “The dog lived. The dog always lives.”

“Stand still.” Junsu took off Yoochun’s beanie, shaking it vigorously. “Is this Joongie-ah’s?”

“I don’t know.” Yoochun shrugged. “I’ve lost track. Does it matter?”

“I suppose not. It’ll be his eventually if it’s not now.” The tenor handed the other man his scarf to wring dry, Yoochun’s stronger hands doing a better job at releasing the excess water from the trailing knitted yarn. “Did you see that car parked in the alley?”

“No!” Yoochun peered around the corner then whistled under his breath. “What is that? It’s nice. Looks dangerous. Like one of those racing cars.”

“I saw the lights turn off.” Junsu finally worked free of his jacket. “Yunho would know what it is. You should call him.”

“I’m not calling Yunho and asking him to come down into the rain to look at a car. He’d kill me.”

“He’d appreciate it.” Junsu blew a raspberry noise at his lover.

“Yunnie-ah’s had several hours without anyone in the house but he and Jaejoong.” Yoochun reminded him. “You know Changmin was gone for a long time. He likes spending a long time watching people. And we were gone. We should be lucky if we see the hyungs at all tonight.”

“True.” Junsu made a face, grimacing slightly. “I’m hungry.”

“Me too.”

“We should wipe down the kitchen counters before we make anything to eat.” The tenor suggested. “Just in case.”

“That was us. Not them.” Yoochun reminded him, pushing open the lobby door. “And no one would have known if you hadn’t shoved your boxers into the dishwasher.”

“How was I supposed to know everyone was going to come home right then?” Junsu remarked with a sniff. “I was glad I found my sweats.”

“You’re the reason we have to wash everything by hand.” Pressing the elevator button, Yoochun nodded at the security guard at the desk, wiggling

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his head in an attempt to get a drop of water out of his ear. “Changmin doesn’t trust the dishwasher anymore.”

“I ran it through a cycle with bleach.” Junsu complained, leaning against the far wall. Hooking his hand into Yoochun’s jeans, he pulled the other man into the lift, rubbing at Yoochun’s stomach with the back of his fingers.

“Keep doing that and we’re going to give the guard something to watch on those monitors.” Micky debated stepping back but the warm feeling left in his belly was too delicious to be ignored. Turning his head, Yoochun swallowed hard when Junsu’s cheek fit into the hollow of his collarbone and throat, tucked in tight and leaving very little doubt that the other man was ready to pick up where they left off in the movie theatre.

“You have to push the button.” Yoochun whispered. “I don’t think I can reach.”

“Ah, let me help you.” Pushing forward, Junsu stretched his arm and pressed the button for their floor, sliding his chest and legs against the front of Yoochun’s body. “I think that’s the right button.”

“Yeah,” Yoochun nodded, his voice tight in his throat. “That’s the right button. You’re good at pushing buttons.”

“Kaku botan shishou.” Junsu’s light giggle drowned under Yoochun’s anguished moan.

“Oh. God.” Yoochun scraped at his tongue with his teeth, making a great show of his disgust. “Don’t use that one. It’s horrible.”

“You didn’t like it?” Junsu looked innocent, his fingers delving down past Yoochun’s waistband, finding the soft ridge he was hunting for and ran his fingernail over its edge. “This botan doesn’t mind my kaku.”

“Stop.” Yoochun growled, groping at his undone pants when the button of his jeans popped open from the pressure of Junsu’s wandering hands. “Aish! Su-su!”

“Look, it’s our floor, Yoochun.” Junsu stepped out into the hallway to their apartment, smiling winningly at the elderly couple waiting to enter the lift. Nodding to the older man and woman, Junsu held the door for them, grinning foolishly at his lover’s flushed face. “Are you coming, Chunnie?”

“No.” Micky’s strangled reply made Junsu grin wider. Clutching at his jeans, Yoochun struggled to hide the thickness of his sex behind his clenched fist. “I think I’ll ride in the elevator for a bit. I’ll see you in a while.”

“Of course.” Junsu replied, switching to Japanese. “I’ll keep your bed warm.”

He laughed to himself as he walked down the hall, hearing Yoochun’s sputtering explanation that Junsu’s Japanese was poor and he didn’t know

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what he was saying. Leaving the other man to apologize, Junsu opened the front door and let himself in.

"I think I speak Japanese fine." Junsu cocked his head, a jaunty nod at himself in the hall mirror. "Of course, I also should have told him I'll keep myself warm too."



Se7en refused to let the taunt of Min's moistened lips pass by without acting. It was too much of a tease, however innocent of a gesture.

Burying his hands into the silk of the younger man's hair, Se7en pulled Changmin close, angling his own face and brushed his lips softly against Min's face. Whispering for the other to trust him, Se7en circled what he wanted, prolonging his agony for just a little while longer.

He first sipped at the dipped hollow above Min's upper lip, licking at the twin ridges with the tip of his tongue. Min tilted his head back, Se7en's thumb pads working in small ovals over his jaw.

"Open for me, Minku." The older man whispered, biting lightly on Changmin's lower lip. "I want to see what you taste like."

"No." Min sighed, his breath hot against Se7en's mouth. "You'll just take what you want. And not give me anything back in return."

"Is that how you think this works, my Minku?" Growling, Se7en bit again, sucking Min's plump moistness into his mouth. "Do you think that this can only be a one-way thing?"

Leaving Min's face, Se7en sank his teeth into the softness of Min's throat, rolling the pale flesh between his bite, pressing harder with little nips. "Let me show you otherwise."

Changmin couldn't breathe. His chest moved and his lungs worked to pull in oxygen but he couldn't catch any air in his mouth or nose. He gasped, muscles in full spasm as Se7en made his way around the column of his neck, taking a circuitous route back to Min's lips, nibbling at random spots until Min's vision swam under a sea of black, his heart stuttering with excitement.

Min hated that his hands had a mind of their own, twisting into the other man's black hair and holding Se7en in place when the other man found a particularly erotic spot. The young man heard his voice, broken and wanting, begging for Se7en to lick right there, to bite right there. He was willing to do anything to keep Se7en close.

Even if it meant losing his mind.

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Because Changmin was certain he was well on his way to losing his mind.

He moaned. He knew he moaned. He could hear it. Echoing in the small confines of the car. Definitely that was his voice breaking under the onslaught of pure pleasure rocking his body.

Yes, Changmin's mind said before it shattered into small glittering pieces, we are lost.

Se7en wanted to fall into the promise of Min's lips but he took his time, savouring the young man's surrender.

The older man was fairly certain if he'd cupped his hand into the rainbow-hued river and pulled out just the light, it still would only be a hint of what Changmin tasted like. Everything vaguely shaped like a star rested in the soft curve of the younger man's lips and in the sweetness of his tongue. Flicking at the edges of Min's mouth, Se7en explored, feeling the rough ridges of Min's lower front tooth with the underside of his tongue, wondering what left the minute chip.

He would show Changmin that intimacy was a give and take venture.

Even if it killed them both.

Taking a breath, Se7en finally drew a kiss from Min's bruised mouth, preparing himself for the electricity he knew deep in his guts would hit him harder than he ever imagined it could.

He'd been a young boy when one of his older female cousins picked a dark red fluted flower from a trailing vine. Curious, Dong-Wook approached and asked her what she was doing. Smiling, she'd given him a sly look and plucked one of the yellow stamen and held out its wet end. Tentatively, he licked at the flower's offering, astonished at the taste of pure unadulterated nectar.

That flower had nothing on the succulence of Changmin's innocent kiss.

The young man bloomed under Se7en's hands, Min's tender urgent mewls enflaming the older man's lust. With the blood rushing from his head, Se7en moved slowly over Changmin's mouth, taking delicate sips that turned into longer draughts of pleasure, taking and returning each mouthful of pleasure Min gave him.

Se7en was more than pleased when he was right. He was even more happy that he didn't have enough wits about him to think much harder than that. The boy just tasted too good to be true. Much too good to kiss and leave at that. He would hate himself the rest of his life if he walked away from the promise of sensuality burgeoning just below the surface of Changmin's quiet personality. And Se7en wasn't much on hating himself.



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The hardness of Se7en's body felt right under Changmin's hands, his knuckles digging into the other man's chest where he held fistfuls of shirt fabric. Enveloped in the scent of Se7en and leather, Min fell, drifting under the seductive aroma and feel of the other's mouth, the faint sting of recent bites leaving a burr on his tender throat.

Under the onslaught of the fierce kiss, Changmin discovered the rest of the world had somehow turned to dust. Everything. Lights. Sounds and even the faint remainder of the jasmine tea he'd shared with Se7en crumbled to a tasteless nothing when the older man's mouth filled his.

Their tongues slid around one another, wrapping into a dance before drawing back. Unable to stay away from one another, the caress returned then deepened, searching for the core of each other's desire. Min was certain Se7en found his. His body quaked and shook when Se7en's fingers stroked at the spot right below his navel then ghosted over his shirt to rub at the hardened peaks on his chest.

He about wept when Se7en's hands dropped and he was left with nothing but a cold rush of air over his heated skin. Panting, Min wasn't sure if he should thank or kill Se7en for stopping.

"If we don't stop, you're going to find out exactly how small this car is." Se7en panted into Min's open mouth.

It was hard to pull away. Too damned hard for Se7en's liking. Even harder was the throbbing length of heat along his thigh and the roar of his blood in his ears. Min's luscious tang remained in Se7en's mouth and he was even more reluctant to swallow, not wanting to wash away the honeyed spice. If he breathed through parted lips, Se7en discovered he could taste the young man against the roof of his mouth, a nip of flavour that promised a lot to Se7en's swollen desire.

"I..." Min gasped, unable to let go of Se7en's shirt. Leaning his forehead on the other man's chest, Changmin struggled to regain his composure, not trusting himself to look into the older man's face.

He knew what he would see there, a wanton reflection of his disheveled hair and desire-darkened eyes. Min didn't think he could stand that close of a look into the abyss he wanted to fall into. Sometimes it was better to leave his demons behind their masks. Safer anyway, he thought.

"If you don't leave now, Minku..." Se7en leaned over Min's body, unlatching the door. "I am telling you, you're not going to see the outside of my hotel room for about a week. I'm going to want to take a very long time making you hoarse. And it's going to be in a place big enough to echo your screams, not tight enough to cramp our bodies into a twisted knot."

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“You’re right.” Changmin finally found his voice. He’d left it there somewhere in his throat. Right along with the heady realization of Se7en’s tongue running along the ridges of his palate. “I better go.”

“Call me when you get inside.” Se7en whispered, grabbing at Min’s waistband before he got too far away. “Or better yet, I’ll call you when I get into bed. I want to listen to you before I sleep.”

“Haven’t you heard me enough for one night?” Min was astonished to find his bravado lurking under the shell-shock echo of his desire. Perhaps his mind wasn’t so far gone.

No, he recanted. Se7en’s smile turned him into goo, a sexy guarantee that neither one of them would get much sleep if he had any say about it. His mind was gone. There was little more than sand left in it.

“No, Minku.” Se7en said with a shake of his head. “I want you to tell me what you saw this afternoon while you were watching all those people. I think that’s what I’d like to hear.”

“Those are silly things.” Min frowned, wrapping his arms around his waist. The rain had softened, leaving a smear of water in the air. “Stupid dreaming things. It’s a bad habit of mine.”

“I like your bad habits.” Se7en purred. “They are as much of a part of you as your crinkled smile and uneven pretty eyes. Did you think I just wanted you for your body?”

“Go to bed, Minku.” The older man said, turning on the lights to illuminate Min’s way. “Wait up for me.”

Changmin walked to the curb, watching as the Supra pulled out of the alley and into the street, a short pop of the horn leaving a mental kiss goodnight on Changmin’s smile. Letting out a puff of air in his cheeks, Min reached for the door handle and froze, staring down at his arm.

Still encased in leather and the sweet-honey spice of Se7en’s body, Min realized he’d not given the other man back his jacket. Briefly debating if he should call Se7en back, a whisper in his mind left him with a naughty thought.

He’d call Se7en that night and tell him of his dreams. But not the ones that Se7en wanted to hear. He would be wearing nothing but the Se7en’s too-large leather jacket on his slender, sweaty naked body. And Changmin would make certain the other man knew it.

Min only hoped his nerve and his voice lasted long enough to make the phone call.

# 7

The phone, Changmin mumbled hotly. The damned phone that kept ringing in the middle of the night. Bleary-eyed, he blinked, trying to focus and find out where he'd left the cursed thing.

Then realized, he was wearing nothing but an oversized plaid-lined leather jacket. And his sweat.

"Shit." Min swore. "Shit. Shit. Shit. Where is it?"

He found it under his ribs, tucked there for when Se7en called him back. Flipping the phone open, he blinked, wondering where he put his glasses. The feel of the jacket on his body made him hard, his sex awakened to a previously untapped arousal. Min had been dreaming, he was sure of it. The sheets of his bed smelled musky and were slightly damp where they stuck to his skin.

"Hello, Minku." Se7en sounded as sleepy as Changmin felt. His voice murmured over Min's senses, satin sheets and candlelight with a chaser of cigarette smoke and charcoal filtered whiskey.

"What time is it?" Changmin turned over, wincing when a sharp pain tore into his back. Hissing, he pulled the jacket away from his torso, his fingers finding deep impressions on his skin. "Ouch."

"I don't know what time it is. That's what I have you for. Every time I call you, you tell me what time it is. I don't even need to wear a watch." Se7en's husky tone poured into Min's groin. "Are you okay, baby?"

Changmin wondered if he'd ever be used to the electrical charge he felt work down from his shoulders, over his arms and arcing back onto his nipples. It should be easy, he thought. Shouldn't this be easy? He'd been listening to Se7en's voice for weeks now, soft little murmurs of nothing in his ears before he slept. They came sometimes in his dreams, fragments of conversations carrying not a bit of substance but just the sound of Se7en's voice.

So how could hearing the word *baby* turn him into formless gelatin?

Calm, Min scolded himself. Keep calm and smooth. Match him with each move. Ignore that you're afraid your stomach is going to ooze out of your body because he sounds so sexy when he says your name. Ignore all of that. Concentrate on giving him the same feelings that he gives you.

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Like we could ever make Se7en ooze, a pessimistic gremlin voice snorted from where it squatted in the back of his mind.

“Minku?”

God, that name again. Why did Dong-Wook ever tell him that the end syllable left his mouth ready for a kiss? And what kind of kiss did it leave him ready for? Certainly not the bone-melting one he shared with the older man in the Supra.

“Minku, did you fall asleep on me?” Se7en chuckled. “Kawaii.”

“I hate that word.” Changmin grumbled, rolling his eyes. Great, he thought, now I sound like a petulant child. “And no, I’m awake. Did you get home alright?”

Turn the focus back onto him, Min reminded himself. Make Se7en talk about himself. Then bring him back around to thinking about you. Changmin worried at his lower lip. Or was it the other way? He’d only read partially into the book on how to seduce someone and it seemed as if every time he opened his mouth, what he’d memorized whispered away into intangible mists. He could never remember what that damned book told him to do when he needed it the most.

“I got home fine. Kind of late but it was worth it.” Se7en stretched out onto his bed, flinging one arm over his head. The huskiness in Min’s voice made him throb, imagining all of the delicious ways he could bring about that raspy purr in bed. “It took me a while to return the car to the garage. There was a lot of traffic.”

“And then imagine my surprise when I got a text message on my phone telling me that a certain mink was snuggled down in my leather jacket, just waiting to be stroked and petted to sleep.” The older man ran a hand over his stomach, letting a satisfied murmur sigh from his throat. “It was all I could do not to call you right then and there but I would have gotten into an accident and I have no intention of dying before I find out exactly how hot I can make that delicious body of yours.”

Okay, Changmin’s gremlin whispered, you’re going to match that? We’re doomed. You’re an idiot. Why don’t you just admit that you’re out of your league and go back to mooning over actresses you see on screen?

We can do this, Min scolded. And why is this a we? I’m talking to myself. This is stupid.

Well, tsked the reptilian gremlin, at least we agree on something. Try to at least put him on the defensive, muttered the little lizard voice, and with that, it was silent.

“Whenever we talk, you’re always the one talking about what you’d like to do to me.” Changmin kept his voice low, not wanting any of the others to

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get curious about his voice coming from behind a closed bedroom door in the wee hours of the morning. “Maybe I want to do a few things to you.”

“I’m always glad to hear anything you might want to do to me.” Se7en replied, delighted at the stumbling catch of Min’s breath. “What did you have in mind, pretty?”

Okay, now what? Changmin thought. Say something.

“I, um, enjoyed your kiss.”

Oh that smooth, he cursed silently. Like Se7en kissed his skinned knee all better because he fell. Where was the seductive drawl he’d been practicing. He might as well send Se7en love letters drawn in colour markers. He sounded more like a little boy crushing on his older brother’s best friend.

“I liked your hands on me.”

Changmin heard Se7en’s purring murmur deepen, more whiskey poured over the rough velvet of the older man’s breathing. *That* was much better.

“My hands didn’t want to be anywhere else.” Se7en replied. “That’s why I had to take them home. Before they got me into a lot of trouble.”

Don’t let him know that you’re not good at this. He already knows I’m not good at this. Don’t let on that you have no idea what you’re doing, Changmin. He’ll lose interest. He’ll walk off and then, Min didn’t know what came after Se7en walking off. He’d not thought that far.

“I’m not good at this.” He heard himself say.

Why the hell couldn’t his mouth and brain agree on something and stick with it? Changmin thought angrily. How hard can it be? Even Jaejoong seemed able to master the simple act of thinking and talking.

“Good at what, Minku?”

“This. Seduction.” Changmin sighed, snuggling down into his bed. The leather remained wrapped tight around his naked body, its hem brushing over his crotch. The rubbing felt good, as if the lightly rough touch was somehow Se7en’s. “I’m not good at this game. I’m never going to win this battle with you.”

“You think this is a battle?” Se7en sounded surprise. “I thought it was a mutually agreed upon friendship.”

“Is that what this is called? A friendship?”

“Did you think that I was going to chase after you until I had you underneath me and then just kiss you on the forehead and leave you with a small trinket to remember me by?” Se7en’s voice lost some of its

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smoothness, roughening with emotion. “Do you think so little of yourself, pretty, that you’re only good for a fuck or two and then there’s nothing else for you to offer someone?”

“I like you, Minnie-ah.” Se7en switched to Korean, emphasizing his point. “Neither one of us is looking for someone to spend the rest of their life with but hell, that doesn’t mean we can’t be lovers and friends. Forever doesn’t just mean roses and doves. Hell, no matter what happens between us, I’ll be your friend.”

“You’re just saying that. Don’t all guys say that?” Min’s reply was barely audible. His low-pitched words cracked and he blinked away the sting of tears filling his eyes. “I just don’t want...”

“You don’t want me to seduce you and then walk away boasting about it?” Se7en asked softly. He heard the hurt in Min’s voice. A realization hit Dong-Wook hard and he sat up in his bed, a simmer of anger just below the surface of his thoughts. “Did someone do that to you? Someone I know?”

“Yes. No.” Changmin sighed. Gritting his teeth, the shame from that time in his life made his throat recoil as if he swallowed a cupful of vinegar.

“Which is it, Minku?” Se7en was firm, insistent in Min’s ear. “Yes to which answer.”

“Both.”

Se7en let out a string of swear words in a muffled flow of Japanese and Korean, returning to the basest of phrases in his vocabulary. “Who?”

“I don’t want to tell you who.” Changmin curled around his own stomach. “It wasn’t anything big. Just a kiss backstage but I heard him later tell someone that he was going to have me. And I was so...angry. I wanted to trust him. Because it felt so good and then after I heard him bragging about how he’d taken my kiss, everything inside of me just flattened.”

God, he’d nearly fainted when Rain touched his mouth, a long lingering stroke of warm lips plundering his own. There wasn’t much time for anything other than surrendering to the older man’s hard exploration before he was left standing there with the air turning his bruised lips cold and a whispered hot promise at the party they would all be at later.

Then as Min thought he would sneak up on the older man to surprise him, he’d stopped frozen with revulsion and dismay to hear Rain bragging about how he would deflower the group’s youngest, then pass him along to someone else in his crew.

“I’ll kill whoever made you feel like shit, Minku.” Se7en’s promise glittered with a malevolence. “What a fucking bastard. If it’s one of my friends, I’ll wring his neck.”

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“No,” Min thought of the cocky arrogant smile he’d fallen for, so different from the warm smoothness of Se7en’s charm. “It’s not one of your friends. I don’t think you two like each other.”

“Did you tell the others?” Se7en’s sardonic bark echoed between them. “No, because if you had, I would have heard about it. You kept it quiet because you were ashamed because he made you feel desirable then trashed you in front of others.”

In the comfort of Se7en’s scent and the warmth of his leather jacket, Min whispered anguish straight into his seducer’s guts. “I don’t want to feel that way again. I don’t want you to make me feel that way at all.”

“I never want to make you feel that way.” Dong-Wook’s anger fought a battle with his sympathy for Min’s shy nature. “Besides, I’m pretty sure that would push Yunho over the edge and he really would kill me.”

“Yunnie-ah would understand.” Changmin defended his leader. “You don’t have to dislike him.”

“I don’t dislike your leader.” Se7en’s laugh lightened the heaviness in Min’s belly. “He’s the one who hates me.”

“That’s because you kept touching Jaejoong during that show.”

“Jaejoong is very touchable.” Se7en replied casually “Although I’m beginning to think he hates anyone who even looks at Kim Jaejoong. They are horrible at keeping their relationship a secret.”

“It’s important to them. Well, important to Joongie-ah that it’s kept quiet.” Min stopped and corrected himself. “If they even had a relationship to talk about.”

“Well, let me make you a promise, Minku.”

“What?” Changmin braced himself for what was to come.

“I’m going to tell you first that this isn’t a battle.” Se7en warned. “I like you, Shim Changmin. You’re funny and smart...”

“I’m not funny.”

“And quarrelsome.” Se7en interjected. “Do you know how rare it is to find someone challenges me? It’s nice to find someone who’ll speak their mind, even if it’s to tell me the sky isn’t blue or that water isn’t wet.”

“I...” Min bit back his words, choking on his argumentative nature.

“And you are funny.” Se7en continued, thinking of all the things he found attractive in the younger man. “You make me laugh and being with you makes me see the world differently. Sometimes, I forget what it’s like to be amazed at the smallest things and then I see your face light up because of something new you’ve seen.”

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“If you could have been in my seat tonight, when you saw the river,” The older man sighed. “Everything is just so new to you. Exciting. Even if it’s something that you’ve done before. You find something different. That just amazes me.”

“I’m not exciting.” Changmin said quietly. “I’m just me.”

“You kidding?” Se7en laughed. “When I kissed you tonight, it was like I was drinking wine for the first time. How could I not want that? How could I not want the person that makes me feel like that in my life? You think I’d turn away from that? It’s not just your body, Minku. I’ve told you that. It’s because of how you make me feel.”

“So, I have a proposal for you.” The older singer didn’t wait to hear Min’s response. “I’m going to let you set the pace. It’s going to test every single damned bit of patience I have but I’m going to let you do the exploring first. You tell me what you want to do and when you want to do it.”

“What’s the catch?”

“No catch.” Se7en promised. “I’ll get to touch. Because it would be too much of a hell to be near you and not even get the smallest of touches but everything else, that’s for you to decide.”

“And if you decide that you trust me enough to give me back the lead, I’ll take it.” Another purr, another velvety whispered promise slithering around Min’s sex.

“I don’t mind... your kisses.” Changmin countered. He didn’t want to lose the heady nirvana he’d glimpsed in Se7en’s car and wasn’t certain enough of his own courage to initiate the affection until he was on steadier ground. “I liked it. A lot. I don’t want them to stop.”

“Okay. I can kiss.” Se7en said. Thank god, Se7en thought to himself. He didn’t think he’d be able to be around Changmin without stealing a kiss or two. “And I won’t molest you in public.”

“God no.” Changmin was horrified at the thought. He certainly didn’t want that kind of attention. “I don’t think I could deal with that.”

“Me neither. My personal life is going to stay personal. I don’t want to drag you through a circus.” The other agreed. “But there’s one thing I do want.”

“What’s that?” Min wrapped his arm around his waist, sniffing at the teary remains of his emotions.

“You don’t see anyone else while we’re doing this.” Se7en said. “It’s bad enough that we’re going to have to work around our two schedules and that I have to share you with the other four, I’m not going to share you with anyone else.”



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“Are you going to do that too?”

“Yeah.” The older man replied. “You’re worth the wait, Minku. And I’ve got enough to keep me busy. You’re more than enough of a complication in my life. I’m pretty sure I’m going to be one in yours.”

“Okay. Agreed” Changmin nodded to himself. He needed to step away from his thoughts, mired down in the fraught up and down of his nerves. “What are you doing tomorrow?”

“I have a photo shoot down in one of the subway stations at noon and then a couple of interviews.” Se7en thought on his schedule. “You?”

“I’m off for a couple of days. There’s a break in our schedule.”

Se7en liked that there was no expectation in Changmin’s voice. The younger man wasn’t looking to snag him into any commitment, just curious about what the day held for him.

“You want to do something later tomorrow night?” He thought he heard Min sniff a bit, making Se7en wonder how much pain did the nameless man left in Min’s tender feelings. Keeping back the bite of anger from his voice, Se7en said. “We can go on a date. Maybe a good dinner. Let me show you some of the Tokyo I know. Would you like that?”

“I’ll have to see if I can get away.” Changmin’s thoughts raced. “The others...”

“Ah, that’s right.” Se7en laughed. “Your older brothers. We can meet someplace. So you don’t have to explain me if you’re not ready to. I’ll text you where once I’ve made reservations.”

“I’m not even ready to explain how I got this jacket.” Min sighed. “I should probably return it to you.”

“No, keep it, Minku.” Se7en’s purr returned, shivering hot fingers along the backs of Min’s thighs. The young man sighed again. He would never get used to the desire Dong-Wook seemed to pull out of him. “I like knowing that you’ve got something of mine wrapped around you. It’s one of my favourite jackets. Now it’s on one of my favourite people.”

Dong-Wook murmured sleepily. “I have to wake up in a few hours, baby.”

“I’m sorry I kept you up.” Min replied. That *baby* got to him again. He’d have to try it out on Se7en to see if he could get the same effect. Later. When he felt braver.

“Minku, I plan on you keeping me up for a long time.” Se7en said. “Even after I hang up. Say goodnight to me. And let my jacket keep you warm until I can get there next to you, okay?”

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“Okay.” Changmin licked at the dryness of his mouth. “Good night, Shichi.”

“Good night, Iro.”

Turning over, Min placed his cell phone on the night stand, wondering if he was ever going to fall asleep. As soon as he lay back into the pillows, he caught the scent of anise and honey from the jacket’s lining and sighed, drifting off under the quiet of his murmuring thoughts.

Sniffing at the plaid lining one final time, he murmured into his pillows, hugging himself tightly. “Good night, baby. I’ll see you tomorrow.”



Changmin stared at the various members as they hurried around the dining area, each gathering up different things for breakfast. He’d chosen a cold rice cereal, sprinkling on the barest hint of sugar and cinnamon before pouring soy milk into the bowl.

He needed a conspirator. He was certain of it. Se7en might be willing to teach him about being seduced but he wanted to have some practical knowledge of how to seduce in turn. And for that, he would have to turn to one of the other members. But which one?

Yunho was out. The leader practically spat every time Se7en was mentioned. Changmin didn’t think he could go up to Yunho and ask him to put aside his animosity so Min could learn how to behave on a date or what to say to another man without sounding like an idiot.

No, Yunho was definitely out.

Jaejoong. Changmin briefly considered his beloved older brother but Jae would prove problematic. He couldn’t keep a secret. His mouth sometimes was too connected to his brain and Jae’s thoughts poured freely. No, Jaejoong couldn’t be depended on to keep his secrets.

Yoochun. Min glanced at the baritone, his cheeks puffed out from eating too many peaches at one. No, Chunnie-ah had the same problem as Jaejoong. Horrible at keeping secrets. And what Yoochun knew, Jaejoong knew. Changmin might as well sit them all down on the couch and tell everything for all the confidence he had in Yoochun’s mouth remaining shut.

That left Junsu.

Changmin contemplated his decision. The tenor was a good choice, he thought. Good at keeping secrets and if sworn to it, would even not tell Yoochun. The added bonus was, he would more than likely be happy that Changmin found someone to rub off some of the naiveté shining from Min’s personality. Also, Junsu did know how to tease and be sensual.

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And unlike Jaejoong's clueless, enigmatic apathy, Junsu actually was aware he was doing seducing someone. That would be the best part of it. Having someone who, while not as sensual as Se7en, at least understood how to flirt.

Yes, Junsu was definitely Changmin's choice, the youngest nodded to himself.

"Susu-ah." Min leaned over to whisper in the older man's ear. "Do you think I could borrow you later? I have something I need to know how to do. And I think you're the only one that can help me."

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# 8

“Are you fucking insane?”

Well, that wasn't the response Changmin was expecting. Not that much of a visceral reaction at least.

“You are absolutely fucking crazy.” Junsu gaped at the youngest member of the group, amazed at what Changmin asked him to do. “Oh, wait until I tell the others.”

“You can't.” Min cocked his head, a small smile on his pretty face. “You promised to stay silent, remember? Not even Yoochun.”

“Fuck.” The tenor swore, gnashing his teeth. Jaejoong asked him if he would help sniff around to find out who Min was secretly talking to on the phone and now, he was bound by his promise to Changmin to keep quiet. That would teach him to agree to secrecy before finding out what he was agreeing to. “Fuck damn it.”

“Hey.” Min winced. “You're supposed to be the pure one. Stop swearing.”

Junsu pressed his lips together, biting on the inside of his cheek. He'd wondered at Min's careful wording of the promise they would agree too and now, with the spectre of Se7en looming on the horizon, Junsu fully understood the verbal trap the young man laid for him.

He definitely was trapped and would have to keep mute on the subject of Min's potential lover.

“Shit.” Junsu put an extra twist of spit on the word, saying it aloud and strong just to make himself feel better. Still unsatisfied, he grumbled, slouching back against the futon couch in the music room. Exhaling hard between gritted teeth, he looked up under narrowed eyes, ashamed he allowed Min to maneuver him into so tight of a corner. “Why Se7en? Why not someone at least half-way decent? Like Shiwon or hell, even Heechul? I'd have even preferred Hyukjae!”

“It's not your preference that's being taken into account,” Min reminded his elder. “If you want to experiment with any of those people, go ahead. But don't expect me to just because you like them better.”

“No!” The other man exclaimed, shocked Changmin would even suggest such a thing. “I'd never do that to Chunnie-ah. He'd be so hurt.”

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“I’m just saying, you have your preferences,” The younger man crossed his legs under him, tucking his feet against the futon’s puffy cushions. “I have mine. And they don’t include Heechul.”

“But they’d include Hyukjae?” Junsu slanted an assessing look at Min. “We can get him over here. I’m sure he’ll be glad to...”

“Junsu-ah!” Changmin growled, snarling at the older man sitting across of him. “Are you going to help me or not?”

“God, why Se7en?” Junsu rubbed at his face. “It could have been worse, I suppose. It could be Junho.”

“Your brother?” Min grimaced. “No. Please. No. He’s too stern-faced. I think you got all of the laughter when you separated in the womb.”

“Can we please not bring my mother’s womb into this?” Junsu asked. “It’s bad enough I have to deal with thinking about Se7en’s and my brother’s privates, I don’t want to think about my mom.”

“Apologies.” Min bowed his head, shivering at the thought of sharing a bed with Junsu’s twin. “Will you help me?”

“And if this doesn’t work out between you?”

“There’s nothing to work out, Junnie-ah,” Changmin replied. “We’re not going to be anything other than lovers and friends. We’re not wanting a partnership.”

“That’s a mistake, Min-min.” Junsu replied, using Jae’s nickname for their youngest. “Of the four of us, you’re the one who should be looking for love. You’re so serious and steady.”

“Junsu, I’m tired of being steady and serious.” Min sighed, wishing he could make the other understand how he felt. “I feel like I’m watching the world go by behind a glass tile wall. I want to be able to say that I lived my life. Not studied it. Love will be there when I need it. Not now. It’s not the right time for love. And why do I have to keep saying that?”

The tenor sighed hard. There would be no working around the promise he’d made Changmin and the younger man would go ahead with his plan to be a part of Se7en’s seduction with or without Junsu’s involvement. Chewing on his lip, Junsu gave up and nodded.

“Okay, I’ll help you.” Junsu agreed. “I don’t want any blame in this. I’m too pretty to die young. You might have a chance if Jaejoong protects you. You better make sure he’s in the room when Yunho finds out about Se7en.”

“Yunnie-ah isn’t going to kill me.” Changmin replied with confidence. “And thank you for helping me. I didn’t want to resort to blackmail.”

“What blackmail?” The tenor’s head snapped up.

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“If I told you now that you’ve agreed to help me, it wouldn’t be blackmail any more.” Changmin shrugged. “Now, let’s get to work. I need to know what I should do on a first date.”



“Little cousin Choi!” Se7en said as a voice answered his call. He waved off the stylist coming to fix his hair. He’d been given a fifteen minute break by the director and was going to use the time wisely. “How are you doing?”

“Dong-Wook!” The other man greeted his friend with a fierce jubilation. “How is my older cousin?”

“I’m doing okay, Seung Hyun.” Se7en spent a few seconds updating the other singer on his Japanese activities, delighted to hear the other Choi laugh. They’d bonded first over having the same last name, taking to calling each other cousin to tease and then in spirit as their relationship deepened.

“Now I know you didn’t just call me because you wanted to hear about how it’s pouring rain here in Seoul.” Tempo laughed. “I know you too well, Se7en. What’s going on?”

“I need you to keep quiet about something.” Se7en sat down in a stairwell, well away from the rest of the crew. Seung Hyun heard the seriousness in his friend’s voice and sobered. “Can you do that for me, Seungie-ah?”

“Yeah, anything. You’ve got me a little worried here, Se7en.”

“No, nothing too bad.” Dong-Wook reassured him. “I just need some help finding a few things out and you’re someone I trust. You’ve also got a lot of connections I don’t have.”

“Sure, Dong-Wook, anything.” He promised. “What do you need?”

“I need you to keep quiet about it.” Se7en warned. “Seriously, it’s got to do with Shim Changmin. I don’t want it getting back to him that I’m asking around.”

“DongBang’s little boy?”

“Changmin’s not a little boy anymore, cousin.” The older man replied. “Trust me on that one. Far from it.”

“Okay.” Seung Hyun’s interest peaked. “Someone’s talking shit about him? Man, you don’t have to step into it. Just wait for one of his hyungs to get into it. It’s like SM created their own gang with those five.”

“No, it’s not like that.” Se7en rubbed at his face, wondering if he was doing the right thing. “A couple of years ago, someone we know decided he

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was going to brag about tagging Shim's ass. I want to know who that someone is."

"Any idea?"

"No clue." Se7en admitted. "I'm guessing someone either high up in the industry or someone popular. Min won't tell me and I've got a feeling this guy needs his face bashed in."

"Min?" Seung Hyun asked. "So it's Min?"

"Yeah, it's Min." Blowing air into his cheeks, Se7en exhaled, leaning back against the upper stairs. He didn't care if the back of his shirt got dirt on it, more concerned with whatever ground the glass into Changmin's voice. "Can you do this for me, little cousin?"

"Yeah, I can." Seung answered. "Have you thought about what you're going to do if we find out who this is?"

"Yeah, I have." Se7en responded, a glacial anger moving into his voice. "I'm going to make sure that bastard learns how to apologize and then keep his mouth shut. Or I'll close it for him. Permanently."



"How the hell are you supposed to keep breathing while you kiss like this? They look like they're eating each other's faces!" Min shifted positions on the futon, thumbing through one of the magazines Junsu brought in from the room he shared with Yoochun. He'd passed by the table of contents and some of the ads, flipping onto a page that depicted two men tangled around each other. "Gods, what the hell? How are you supposed to breathe doing this?"

Junsu sighed. Teaching their youngest what sex and seduction was going to be a very long task. "I didn't bring these in so you could look at the pictures. That would scare you off."

"I can take it, Susu-ah." Changmin muttered, turning the page to get a better look at what the men were doing. "How is this even possible without dislocating your hip?"

"I don't know." Junsu admitted. "I've never done that. Never mind the pictures. There's an article in there about how to... prepare yourself for things."

"For things?" Min's eyebrows shot into the fringe on his forehead. "Things like sex? I don't want to know about sex, Junnie-ah. I want to know about what to say and how to say it. Sex is going to be what Se7en teaches me."

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“Okay, rule one of this,” Junsu snatched the magazine from Min’s hands. “We are never going to say his name. It gives me the shivers. I still think this is possibly the worst idea you’ve ever had.”

“No, the worst idea I had was ever thinking you were smooth enough to help me with Se7en.” Changmin retorted. “I would have been better off with Joongie-ah.”

“I’d be insulted if I didn’t know that Jaejoong couldn’t help you cross the street without getting distracted by the traffic lights.” The tenor made a face back at Changmin. “I’m your best bet and you know it.”

“I know. Sadly.” Min muttered, putting the stack of magazines to the side. “Really, I don’t want to know about the mechanics of this stuff yet.”

“It’ll be on you before you know it.” Junsu cautioned. “Well, he’ll be on you before you know it.”

“Junsu!”

“Sorry.” The tenor shrugged. “What do you think you need, really?”

“Really?” Min thought on it.

You need to know how to keep your tongue and your brain connected, his inner gremlin whispered. You keep thinking one thing and then your tongue goes and spoils everything. Maybe you should just cut it out and use notecards.

Great, now even the evil parts of my mind are working against me, Min frowned. Pushing aside the gremlin’s inane suggestions, he thought hard about what he wanted.

“I get shy whenever Se7en says something that makes me...” Changmin wasn’t sure how to explain the range of emotions the other man brought out in him. “He says things that make me feel like I’m on fire or my skin gets too tight.”

“Yeah?” Junsu sat up straighter. “Like what?”

“He calls me Minku.” Crimson was not a good look for him, Changmin decided, even though it appeared to be the only colour his face seemed to be recently.

“Minku?” Junsu tried out the word. “What does it mean?”

“Mink.” Another wave of red filled Min’s cheeks and he sighed, resigning himself to his embarrassment. “He told me that when he says it, it leaves his mouth like a kiss.”

“He has a pet name for you?”

“Can we keep focused on what I need and not on what Se7en has?”



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“I think what Se7en has is what you should be focused on.” Junsu gave the younger man a sly look. “You’ll have to be focused on it soon enough.”

“I hate you.” Min grumbled.

“Okay, I’m sorry.” Junsu held back his laughter at the vexed look on Min’s face. “It’s just very... sweet. I wouldn’t have thought Se7en would be sweet. And you get shy. That makes it even better.”

“I am going to walk out of this room and post naked pictures of you and Chunnie onto the forums if you don’t help me.” Changmin threatened. “I have some you know. From Bora Bora. When the two of you went skinny dipping at the far end of the beach.”

“You do not!” Junsu punched Min on the arm, earning him a slap back. “Shit. Do you? Shit.”

“Still swearing. You do that too much, Junnie-ah.”

“Crazy people make me swear.” Junsu replied. “Okay, focus.”

“Do you pay attention to what he does?” The older man asked, scratching at the back of his head. He’d never had to actively think about how to act around someone he found attractive and the younger singer seemed genuinely perplexed. “Or do you just sit there and blush?”

“I can’t help but pay attention to what he does.” Changmin replied. “Most of the time, he’s touching me. Either with just his fingers on my arm or face or sometimes on my back while we walk. I can’t even think.”

“You need to get on the offensive.” Junsu plotted, his quick mind working the angles of Min’s personality. While studious, Changmin had little to no real experience with normal social situations, having spent most of his life around too serious adults and too mature situations. “Did you ever play tag?”

“What? Like the chasing game?”

“Yes, that tag.” Junsu rolled his eyes. “What other kind of tag is there? Never mind, don’t answer that. Yes or no? Did you ever play tag? Or hide and seek?”

“A couple of times.” Min shrugged. “I wasn’t very good at tag. I could never keep straight who was It. Until it was me. And it was me a lot.”

“Seduction is like playing tag,” Junsu explained. “You have to tap the other person and then dash away before they tag you back. Unless of course you want to be tagged back right away and then you just stay there. Seduction is a small dash and then letting the other person tag you.”

“You’re not making any sense.” Changmin complained.

“Okay, he calls you Minku. What do you call him?”

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“Hyung. Although I did call him Shichi last night.”

“Shichi is good.” Junsu creased his brows. “Don’t call him hyung. You don’t hear Yunho calling Jaejoong hyung do you?”

Min thought on it and shook his head. “No.”

“You’re supposed to be equals in this.” The tenor leaned forward. “Every time he touches you, you should touch him back. Small touches like he does to you. Don’t count them out. I know you. You’ll keep a running total in your head to make sure you’re even.”

“I wouldn’t!” Changmin responded hotly.

Yes, you would; the gremlin snorted. You would carry around a notebook and make little hash marks or count them off on an abacus. Willing his inner voice to shut up, Min continued.

“Okay I would.” He admitted in a soft voice. “So just, be spontaneous.”

“Well, you can try to be spontaneous.” Junsu said. “You can do it. You just have to relax around Se7en. Like you relax around us. Do you feel nervous near the members?”

“No, but,” Changmin replied. “That took me a long time. Everyone was so intimidating. Being around Se7en is worse. It’s like trying to drink soju someone’s pouring into my open mouth and I can’t swallow.”

“Ah, then we’ll have to teach you how to swallow, Minnie-ah.” Junsu smiled. “And I’ll explain later why my saying that is very naughty.”



Se7en checked his wrist watch. He’d texted Changmin with the address to an exclusive restaurant at the Mandarin Oriental. A request made through his manager arranged for a private dining area to be set up for him, their table overlooking a view of the city. Restless, Se7en played with the napkin at his elbow, wondering if he shouldn’t have arranged for a car for the young man.

“Sir,” The waiter bowed at the area’s entrance. “Your guest has arrived. He’ll be here shortly.”

Se7en stood, putting the napkin down, the fine linen twisted into a knot from his fingers. Turning, he was about to greet Changmin when the words on his tongue died an early death.

Dong-Wook was surprised the waiter had the presence of mind to find the private dining room after seeing Changmin. Se7en was fairly certain his own short journey back to the table would be tremendously difficult all things considered.

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The younger man's somber prettiness had been transformed to a sensual, erotic beauty. Long legs encased in a pair of black trousers, Min's lean body seemed to flow into the air, his eyes wide and hungry for the view. The tan of his skin shone gold next to his pale dove grey shirt, the top three buttons undone and the collar pulled slightly away from the strong column of his throat. Min's nervous habit of chewing while in thought left a trace of bite marks the boy's lower lip and Se7en waited until the waiter left the area before moving forward to do something about the disappearing soft dimples.

And Se7en wanted those long legs wrapped up around his shoulders so badly he could barely stand the craving in his sex.

In Dong-Wook's mind, nothing he ate that night would come near to the tempting delicacy standing trembling in his arms. Tilting his head, Se7en claimed Min's mouth for his own, lightly brushing his tongue along the dimpled flesh until Changmin sighed and leaned into the embrace, his hands rising to skim Dong-Wook's ribs.

The sigh opened Min's mouth for Se7en's tongue to slide in, slow and sensual along the ridge of Changmin's upper lip. After catching at the dip on the younger man's teeth, Se7en pressed further in, deepening the kiss while he cradled the back of Min's head with one hand. His fingers spanned the young man's lower back, stroking at the lines of strong muscle running up Changmin's spine.

Not wanting to draw away, Se7en groaned loudly when Min stepped back, the younger man's eyes dropped coyly from Dong-Wook's face. Staying inside of Se7en's loose grasp, Changmin allowed himself a single glance up at the older man's eyes, pleased at the darkened swell he saw in the depths of Se7en's eyes. Tilting his head back in a defiant, obvious challenge, Changmin straightened his shoulders and stood square against Se7en's hard body.

"You look," Se7en searched for the word he wanted to use, falling back on a simple whistle. "Amazing works but I was thinking... God, I don't even know what I was thinking."

"Why don't we eat first, mitsu?" Changmin felt a small dart of victory dance over his heart at Se7en's sharp intake of breath when he heard the endearment. "Then we can spend the rest of the night talking about what you were thinking. Or maybe just thinking about talking."

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Se7en let out a small purring moan. He couldn't help himself. He doubted anyone would have blamed him for letting the sound out of his belly. Although he was fairly certain that the restaurant would frown on him punching out the waiter standing at the side of their table, the man's eyes fixed on Changmin's luscious mouth.

The younger man held a pinch of crab meat between his fingers, eyes half closed as he raised it to his open lips. Dripping with butter, the succulent treat poised just at the brink of being consumed. Se7en watched with fascination when Min's tongue tip slid out to catch a drop of the sweet liquid before it fell onto the pale blue linen table cloth.

"You can go now." Se7en whispered to the waiter, pointedly glancing to the open doorway. "And don't come back. We can handle it until the next course."

Se7en turned slowly, nearly missing Min opening his mouth and tucking the morsel into the cup of his tongue. Chewing slowly, Changmin sucked lightly at his fingers, licking at the butter until it was gone. Se7en reached for his wine glass, taking a long draught in the hopes to numb the growing thickness in his crotch.

"Do you like the crab?" Dong-Wook asked over the rim of his glass, wishing he'd brought that look of satiation to Changmin's face.

"It's nice." Changmin pulled back a slender membrane of the crab's shell, digging out a chunk of garlic seasoned meat with a small fork. Dipping the crab into a shallow bowl of butter, he sighed with frustration as the meat slid off of the tines and into the warm liquid. "How do you eat it with this fork?"

"It's just the two of us here, Minku." Se7en purred. "I don't mind if you use your fingers."

Min dug into the butter, hunting out the wayward crab meat. Gathering it together, he leaned forward, maneuvering the mouthful in, suckling off the butter in the process. He met Se7en's bemused eyes, the older man bending closer and rubbing off a trickle of butter from Min's chin, bringing the moistness up to his own mouth.

"I think I got all of it." Se7en gripped Min's chin, turning the younger man to the side and making a thorough inspection. "Pity."

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No problem, Changmin schooled himself. Respond with something back, he said, shushing the snort that rose in the recesses of his mind. Min bent his head and pressed the tip of his tongue against Se7en's thumb pad, licking at the roughness he found there.

He nearly made it, drawing his tongue back into his mouth and enjoying the taste of Se7en's body mingling with butter. Min was certain he would have been fine if he hadn't taken a peek at the other man's face and saw Se7en swallow hard, his throat convulsing as Changmin drew back.

Min was really beginning to hate the colour red.

"You're very cute when you blush." Se7en leaned one elbow on the table, canting his head as Min buried his face into a linen napkin. "Actually, sometimes I wonder if that gorgeous rose colour extends to other parts of your body, not just your cheeks."

"Stop it." Min gasped, reaching for his water and frowned at the lonely rattle of ice on the bottom. "You're making me jittery."

"I like making you jittery." Se7en grinned, moving the glass closer to Min's grasp. "Here, baby. Drink mine. Yours is empty."

"What happened to the waiter?" Looking around, Changmin realized he and Se7en were all alone in the secluded room.

"I chased him off." Se7en stood, taking a pitcher of water from the sideboard and refilled Changmin's glass. Leaning down, he ghosted a whisper into the younger man's ear, letting his tongue have the tiniest sip of Min's lobe. "He was staring at you. It was pissing me off."

Changmin choked, trying to catch his breath around the sip of water in his lungs. Coughing lightly, he tapped at his own chest, stilling when Se7en's hand rubbed a circle of fire between his shoulder blades. Min wanted to tilt his head back and beg for a kiss, feeling Se7en's breath against his cheek. He knew he shouldn't. Not so early in the evening. And certainly not right after he spit into his own mouth to clear his airway.

"Kiss me."

The words were out of his parted lips before Min could even wipe the thought from his mind. When he got home, he was going to have a serious talk with the little lizard brain taking over his life.

How would someone standing over the edge of a table kiss someone sitting down, the overly logical part of his mind asked? Wouldn't it be difficult? And wouldn't Se7en's back end up hurting? Was it too much of an imposition for the other man to lean?

Will you just shut up and open your mouth, his gremlin sighed, poking Changmin senseless.

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Tokyo blurred behind him, steel structures dotted with lit constellations and hidden behind banks of rainy mist. Everything in Min's world telescoped down to the mouth moving over his. Creamy smooth, Se7en's tongue raked over the inside of Min's lower lip, teasing out a pout until the older man heard a sigh of surrender pour from Min's throat.

Se7en laid his hands on Min's waist, maneuvering the younger man up until Changmin sat on the edge of the table, his long legs straddling Se7en's hips. Pressing further in, the older man coaxed Min's body with long even finger strokes along the younger man's back, subtly arching the trembling singer into the cradle of his arms. Moving until his thighs touched the table's hard edge, Se7en bent down, fully capturing Min's moist lips with a savage kiss.

Se7en's tongue tickled along the ridges of his mouth's roof and Changmin heard a giggle bubble up from his belly. Smiling despite the unsteadiness of his mind, Min rocked against Se7en's broad shoulders, laying his shaking hands on the other man's solid form. Strength resonated under the spread of Min's fingers, Se7en's taut muscles rippling with a graceful fluidity that left Changmin breathless.

Min could only imagine how the power of Se7en's body would feel over him, holding him down against the softness of a bed or the strength of Se7en's hands wrapped around his wrists while the older man bit his way down Min's body. Losing his mind with the rush of sensations his thoughts left behind, Min gulped at the sweet honey of Se7en's mouth, needing to quench the hot thirst riding his throat.

Kissing Se7en didn't seem to be doing anything to slake off the need working through his body, Min realized. If anything, it was like pouring kerosene on a wild fire. He was going to burn up under the older man's touch. God, Min thought to himself, I'm going to die doing this and I don't even care. I want this. I want him. Very badly.

"You taste like unripe sin, Minku." Se7en breathed, resting his forehead against Min's, stopping just long enough to catch his breath. Nipping at the butterfly kiss along Min's upper lip, the older man moved along the length of Min's tender moue, licking at the dimpled in edges of Min's moaning shy smile. "And if I don't step back from you, I'm going to end up breaking every promise I made to you. Maybe even a few that I made to myself."

"Don't step back," Min whispered softly. His tongue drove a wet trail around Se7en's lower lip, feeling at the swell of the other man's flesh. "Not yet. Please, Mitsu. Not yet."



Jaejoong hooked his legs over Yunho's thighs, his attention raptly fixed on the video game the leader and Yoochun were playing. He'd already

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gotten a bruise on his arm from Yoochun's fist when the baritone lost control over his own body and barreled into Jae, driving his digitized race car into a wall. Yunho took advantage of the catastrophe and surged ahead, running his car hot to the finish line. A few blocks from the end, Yunho's car blew, taking a penalty and earning him a warning look from Jaejoong when the leader leaned forward to punch at the coffee table in frustration. Junsu's high pitched laughter echoed in the long space, bouncing off of the walls until it drilled down into Jae's ear drums.

"It's just a game." Jae reminded them, finding the frame he'd left off in his Gravitation manga. "Stop hitting me or I'll smack you both."

"Sorry, Joongie-ah." Yunho whispered, biting at Jaejoong's exposed neck.

Jae frowned, trying to trace back to the page he'd been on. A slight buzz from his cell phone made him frown deeper, a frown that turned to a scowl when he saw the number on the screen. Excusing himself, Jae took himself away from the screaming rampage of testosterone in the living room and into the relative quiet of his bedroom.

"Hello." The singer sat down on their broad bed set under a set of high windows, nestling down into the soft pillows he'd propped up against the headboard. "What do you want?"

"Hello to you too, Kim." Rain rasped a sullen greeting. "Nice to hear your voice again, bitch."

"What do you want, Bi?" Jae repeated, crossing his legs at his ankles. He kept one eye on the door, watching the hall in case Yunho decided to join him. The last thing Jaejoong wanted was for his lover to hear him talking to Jung Ji-Hoon.

"I thought we had this settled." The other man said, his voice gruff.

"We do." Jae worried at one of his nails. He would have to find a clipper to cut off the rough edge before it cut Yunho's skin. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"I want to know why someone is asking around about me and..." Rain cut off, keeping his voice low. "Why is that night coming up now? You sent your boys to kick my ass back then. You're sending more now?"

"I still don't know what you're talking about." Jae sat up, moving back until he was comfortable. "I don't have any boys."

"The guys who broke my nose and fingers two years ago, those weren't your boys?" The other singer asked sarcastically. "Funny, they sure as hell knew your name when they were beating the shit out of me and telling me to stay away from that baby boy in your group."

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“They weren’t mine.” Jae shrugged. His fondness for Rain faded to dust after seeing Changmin’s teary face and overhearing the other singer’s boasting laughter as he spoke to his sycophants. “I don’t even know who they were. They must have been fans of Changmin’s. They were probably around when I was talking to my auntie about how angry I was when Minnie-ah was hurt because you were an asshole.”

“You have every asshole you meet beat up?”

“No, I just have friends who get pissed off when people I love are hurt.” Jae responded. “It’s nice to have friends. I like my friends a lot. Maybe you pissed off someone else?”

“I heard this guy is asking specifically if I like to seduce virgins.” Rain muttered. “Didn’t mention Changmin by name but I figured, he might know exactly what he was asking about.”

“Did one of your boys say anything?” The singer bit on his lip, hearing someone leave the bathroom down the hall. “I didn’t. You promised you would leave Changmin alone and I promised I wouldn’t mention how much of a fucking asshole you are to anyone else.”

“I told you, no one said anything. Not a word.” Cursing, the other man continued. “My boys think that I was drunk that night and didn’t know what the hell I was saying. What the hell else do you want from me? I said I was sorry.”

“I don’t know, Rain,” Jaejoong admitted. “I really don’t know.”

It was curious that the situation with Rain would rear its ugly head up now that they were in Japan. As far as he knew, he’d only ranted into Scarlet’s ear about how he felt about Rain and what he wished he could do. He didn’t ask Scarlet to whisper suggestions into anyone’s ears and he’d not even known about the men who caught the other singer at the back of a club and reminded him of his manners. At least not until Rain called him to apologize and told Jae he considered Min off limits as of that moment.

Scarlet of course, loving Jaejoong, was more than happy to send someone to kick in Rain’s face. The man Jaejoong thought of as his auntie knew people. And those people would do anything for Scarlet who in turn, would do anything for her Joongie-ah. No, Rain’s face getting broken had been something too easily arranged in Jae’s mind.

While thankful for Scarlet’s intervention, Jae was mildly horrified at the thought of Rain’s face being smashed in. Only mildly, Jae reminded himself. It was much less horrifying than the look of pain and anguish on Min’s face after the younger man fled a party that should have been a happy moment in their lives. Actually, Jaejoong thought on it, he really wasn’t all that bothered about Rain’s nose being broken.



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He just didn't want Rain's stupid mind games of the past to come back and haunt Min. Especially now that their youngest member appeared to be finally allowing himself some down time and enjoying his life.

"Look, I'm doing a lot of different things right now, Kim." Rain said. "I'm going to pretend like none of this happened. If you find out who's asking around, see if you can't shut that guy up too. Just go complain to one of your friends, I'm sure he'd take care of it."

"Pretty sure none of us are going to cry if it gets out that you're a dick, Rain." Jae responded. "I just don't want Changmin to get hurt again. If someone's asking around, it's because you did something else."

"Maybe you should stop trying to, what was it that you said?" Jae recounted the conversation. "Going to get a sweet piece of ass that no one ever touched before? I've got nothing to do with this, Rain."

"Night, Rain." Jae said, hearing the other man seething with anger on the other end of the line. "If you have to start looking over your shoulder because of something you did, it won't be TVXQ who'll be looking back at you. We're done with you. And don't lose my number, please. Or I'll let Yunho answer the phone and you can explain to him why you're calling me."



"Do you want dessert, Minku?" Se7en asked, dipping his finger into a dollop of whipped cream dotting a slice of cheesecake. Holding the sweet up, he smiled when Changmin bent down and sucked the cream off.

"That's good." Changmin remained nested against the V of Se7en's legs, cupped into the curve of the other man's body.

He'd eaten the rest of dinner sitting there, Dong-Wook feeding Min with carefully chosen bites of food, licking the fork clean after it left Min's mouth. Se7en had eaten a few bites of his own, alternating between small nibbles along Changmin's neck and mouthfuls of tender beef taken directly from Min's clenched teeth when the younger man felt like sharing.

Holding up a strawberry, Changmin ate off the tip, turning Se7en kissed away the pink dewdrops left on Min's chin from biting the fruit. His shyness turned into a frolic of laughter when Se7en chewed noisily on his jaw, murmuring into the older man's ear that he was full and couldn't eat another mouthful.

"Do you want to go for a ride?" Se7en whispered, putting the bitten strawberry on a plate. He envied the split-ended fruit, its juiciness suckled dry from Min's mouth. "I have a driver who can take us around. Long limo, tinted glass so no one can see inside. I can take you to a club. I know just the one. Hard to get into but they'll let us in."

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“Truth?”

“Baby, I always want the truth from you, even if it’s going to hurt.”

“Do you think we could go play pachinko? Maybe go to one of the fairs?” Min asked, his lashes casting long shadows over his cheeks. “Maybe even walk around one of the malls? It’ll be nice to go out and just be...normal. Do you mind?”

“No, Minku.” Se7en’s grin was wide, delighted that the young man wanted to share a simple pleasure with him. “I can’t think of anything better I’d like to do with you than something normal. And then maybe, later, we can do more normal things in the back of the car, if you want.”

How did he tell Se7en that he could barely walk with the heaviness in his groin and the turmoil in his stomach? That everything he ate that night tasted of star anise, even the water and he didn’t think he could even tell anyone what colour the chairs were because everything just became a grey mess except for the golden-skinned, laughing older man who teased him with gentle, probing hot kisses.

“I do.” Changmin replied, “Want that is. You. I sound stupid.”

“Not to me, baby.” The other man laughed, sliding Min off of the table and leaving his hand on the younger man’s hip. “Anything that has you saying you want me, sounds just fine to me.”

# 10

“It’s a kumiho.” Changmin smiled, his voice soft as he accepted the small plush toy from Se7en’s hand. “And it has seven tails.”

“In Japan, it’s called a kitsune. And unlike at home, they’re supposed to be good.” Se7en bumped shoulders with Min as they walked through the crowded fairgrounds. “The more tails they have, the wiser they are.”

“Really?” Changmin contemplated the plush, stroking at its fur. The tails were soft on his skin, nearly as gentle as Se7en’s hand on his waist. “Tell me more.”

“That’s all I know.” Dong-Wook admitted bashfully. “I’m not much of a reader. Well, I read but I’m not...hell, I don’t know what I’m saying here.”

“I’ll read up on it.” Min grinned, thinking of delving into folk tales. “Thank you for getting it for me. It looks like you.”

“You’re welcome.” Se7en rotated his arm, working out the soreness in his shoulder.

Throwing twenty baseballs in a row left him with a nasty ache, one that would probably leave a bruise along his arm but the silly grin the kitsune brought to Changmin’s face was well worth every inch of pain. He’d spotted the seven-tailed kitsune among the more expensive prizes and knew the plush fox would have to go home with Changmin.

“I won something too.” Min replied with a wicked grin. Se7en liked that smile much more than the joyful he’d gotten with the fox. It held a lot more promise for delicious, dirty things to come. “I pitched pebbles into a bowl while you were in the bathroom.”

“Ah, I leave you for a few minutes and you become a gambler?” Se7en laughed hard at Min’s tongue sticking out at him. “What did you win, Minku?”

“A CD.” Changmin held up a bootleg copy of Se7olution, the cheap paper wrapper stinking of fresh ink. “I thought maybe I could get the singer to sign it for me. Do you think he would do that?”

“God, that looks horrible,” Se7en took the jewel case from his future lover. “Do you have a pen?”

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“No,” The young man made a face. “I left the house only with my wallet. I should have brought my backpack but I thought that would look a bit childish.”

“I don’t know.” There was a hint of wickedness in Se7en’s wink. “We could always pretend you are a school boy that the evil nasty leech of a singer wants to debauch.”

“Is that really pretending?” Min stuck his hands into his jacket pockets, laughing hard when Se7en placed a dramatic hand to his chest as if Min’s words struck him deep. “You’re silly. You’re making me silly in return. If this keeps up, I’ll be like Junsu laughing at my own stupid jokes.”

“Sometimes,” The singer admitted. “Silly isn’t bad, Minku. Sometimes it’s a lot of fun. Other times, silly can lead to some very nice things.”

“I’m not good with silly.” Changmin responded. “Well, sometimes with the other members. I’m silly with Jaejoong.”

“How do you get along with the other members?” Dong-Wook asked. “And tell me the truth, not what your label wants everyone to believe.”

“The truth is,” Min said. “We’re closer than what we can show. And it’s nice. We’re like a family of brothers.”

“How so?”

“We fight,” Changmin wrinkled his mouth into a moue, recalling some of the more legendary arguments they’d had. “I think it’s because we’re all stubborn, well except for Yoochun who just refuses to listen. He’s the only one of us who doesn’t scream and yell. I hate fighting with him because he doesn’t give you the satisfaction you need.”

“So you fight a lot?” Se7en contemplated a small kiosk that sold hard candies, buying a handful of sugar-dipped lemon drops to share with the younger man.

“In the beginning, we did.” Min took a candy, popping it into his mouth and licking off the sugar left on his lips.

Se7en thought he would die before the powdered white frost was gone.

“Now, it’s different.” Contemplative, Changmin fell into step beside Se7en. “Now, Yunho really is the leader, and the rest of us know that the only way we’re going to achieve what we all want is to push forward together.”

“You get along with Yunho?”

“Hyung is easy to get along with,” Min laughed at Se7en’s sour face when he mentioned the group’s leader. “You’re the only one who doesn’t.”

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“I know a couple of people who are leery of Yunho.” The older man commented. “And you’ve never been on the receiving end of a dodge ball thrown by him. He hits hard.”

“You know why he threw that ball hard.”

“I know that he never aimed for Jaejoong.” Se7en grinned knowingly. “It’s not a secret that the two of them are close. No matter how well everyone tries to hide it.”

“Yunho and Jaejoong try to be discreet.” Changmin blushed. “But I share a wall with their room and I had to move my bed to the far side so I didn’t hear them. They’re also very loud sometimes.”

“Ah, that’s a good secret.” Se7en wiggled his eyebrows at the younger man, making Changmin laugh. “I promise, I won’t say anything.”

“Junsu and Yoochun are louder.” The young singer sighed. “I’m glad they’re at the other end of the hall. They’re also less cautious about where they start things. Jaejoong is always shooing them off to their room. And you can’t trust them to be home alone with one another. They have no respect for the common area.”

“They sound like the typical younger brothers,” Dong-Wook said. “Well the no respect part. I don’t mean incest is typical for brothers. Ah, I’m not making much sense.”

“You are.” Min nodded. “They’re all brothers to me, and to the other members who aren’t their lovers.”

“Good.” Se7en look relieved. “So you don’t fight anymore?”

“We do.” Changmin shook his head. “But only about things that matter and never about ego. In the beginning, I think we argued a lot because we each needed to prove to one another that we deserved to be there. Over time, we found out each others’ strengths and weaknesses. We still fight about things.”

“Who do you fight with the most?” Se7en asked. The insight to the close knit group was fascinating to him. TVXQ was very protective of itself, closing in ranks when anyone on the outside so much as poked at one of the members. Even people who worked for the group were still circling the five, never truly let into their tight enclave.

“I fight with Yoochun the most.” Min said bashfully. “I get mad at him for being too emotional. He feels everything and reacts, sometimes without thinking. I’m not patient enough with his emotions and push too hard at him to withstand hardships.”

“You said you hated fighting with him.”

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“I hate fighting with him because he walks away.” Changmin admitted. “When he’s mad, he turns around and walks away from you. The others, they step right into it and you can at least release some of your anger in yelling.”

“With Chunnie-ah, you’re the only one doing the yelling. It’s not very satisfying. And I always feel stupid because when he does that, to me it feels like he’s running away but to someone watching from the outside of the argument, it looks like he’s being the mature one.” A gaggle of young boys ran past the pair, a loud boisterous noisy group seeking out one of the rides. “I’d rather someone yell back at me.”

“For the most part, we get along.” Changmin said. “And I hardly argue with Yunho. He feels very much like an older wiser brother. But he’s hard to talk to about more intimate things. He gets shy. For those things, I have to go to Jaejoong, who doesn’t have any shame really.”

“He always strikes me as the shy one.”

“Joongie-ah is bashful.” Min countered. “He really opens up to you if you’re close to him. And people like him a lot but he doesn’t really like them back in return as quickly. It takes a long time for him to feel comfortable with someone. And still, that doesn’t mean he tells you his secrets.”

“I’m not going to ask for any of Jaejoong’s secrets.” Se7en promised. “I think I know a few. You can see it in how he reacts to people coming near him. Some people he lets close to him and others make him flee to the group.”

Changmin nodded. “Jaejoong is our lost kitten. He has claws and bites but really, just wants food and love. He doesn’t feel as if he deserves it though. Yunho says that one day, he will. And the world will see the Joongie-ah that we all do.”

“Until then, we protect him.” Min shrugged, dismissing the dichotomy of Jae’s life as a necessity for the older man to survive. “Yunho says I’m like him but for different reasons.”

“Sadly, I have to agree with your hyung.” Se7en admitted. “You don’t let people in close to you. And you don’t think you deserve affection and love.”

“You do, you know.” Dong-Wook tugged at Changmin’s waist, running his hand down the length of the younger man’s back in a quick caress. “You deserve a lot of affection. And definitely to be loved.”

“I’m not looking for love, remember?” Min’s plaintive words broke off a bit of Se7en’s empathy, lodging deep into his heart.

“Ah, Minku.” Se7en said. “Even if you’re not looking to be in love, you still should be loved. They’re not mutually exclusive. Your hyungs love you, but aren’t in love with you.”

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“True.” Changmin acknowledged slowly.

“I wouldn’t mind loving you, Minku.” Se7en said casually. He liked the look of shock on Min’s face. He’d enjoy taking that look off with a few well placed kisses. “I’m man enough to admit it.”

“I wouldn’t mind if you loved me.”

Se7en barely heard Changmin’s response, a half-murmured reply nearly lost in the bustle of the crowd but he did hear it. And it warmed his belly.

They continued to walk through the crowd, weaving around entire families out for the evening. Laughter and shrieks tore through the air, a tilting ride swinging cars about the air in haphazard circles. Lights flashed and popped as a strength testing game announced a winner, a booming train whistle going off above them.

Min hid his smile when Se7en’s fingers brushed against his palm, their eyes meeting in a slow dance around other people before they were separated by a little girl running between them. Joining again, their hands touched, binding them together for the briefest of moments that they carried with them, a ghostly line between their bodies.

“What do you want to do now?” Dong-Wook looked about, slightly overwhelmed by the glut of people around them. “Hungry?”

“Would you believe, no?” Changmin patted his belly. “I’m still full.”

“Good.” Se7en winked. “I don’t think my heart could take it if I had to watch you eat something else. If you take as much time on me as you do your food, I’m going to die a happy man.”

Min didn’t know what to say. Not to the blatant flirtation out in the open among other people. To Se7en, it was easy, just a breath in and then, seduction out. As easy as blinking. Changmin felt none of that ease when he spoke. But then, being around the older man did make his mind cloud. It was hard to think when all he wanted to do was suck the air from Se7en’s mouth and pull it down into his belly.

Control. Take some control, he admonished his tongue. Talk, damn it; his mind sighed.

“How about a ride in the back of that limo?” Min asked, his voice deepening with a sly teasing. “Maybe we can go visit the river again?”



“Who called earlier, Boo?” Yunho stripped his t-shirt off, pulling it free from his arms. He debated pulling on a pair of sweats to sleep in but one look at Jaejoong’s lean body framed against the bathroom door changed Yunho’s mind.

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Jae worked his toothbrush around his teeth, spitting out the excess foam in his mouth before rinsing. Leaning over the bathroom counter, the thin fabric of his drawstring pants molded over Jae's body, drawing down into the crease of his backside. Standing in the bedroom, Yunho could appreciate the shadowed cleft, even more so knowing that the rounded ass around it was his.

"Stop leering at me." Jae washed his face, scrubbing at his cheeks with a soapy wash cloth. "I can see you in the mirror."

"Can't help it, baby." Yunho responded with a smile. "You'd hate it if I stopped."

True, Jae thought. But seeing the want in Yunho's face made it difficult to get his face washed. It was hard to lean against the cold marble with his sex thickening between his legs.

"And who called?" The leader pulled back the covers of their bed, moving the pillows back into place. He'd never understood Jae's need to nest but the soft feather forms made it easier to cuddle the other man against him. Jaejoong was easy to find in bed, herded in by his nest of softness and open to Yunho's kisses on the other side. "Was it Changmin? He's not back yet."

"He said he'd be late." Flicking off the bathroom light, Jae padded into the room, crawling onto the bed on all fours. "Something about wanting to hear some poetry after he got some dinner."

"He's odd." Yunho shook his head, amazed at what their youngest did to pass the time. Turning off the main light, Yunho slid under the covers, letting his eyes adjust to the ambient light coming from the windows. In a few moments, his lover's face became clear to him, the shadows drawing away from Jae's pretty features. Moving in closer, Yunho wrapped his arms around Jae's waist, kissing at the other's lower lip.

"You taste good. Like mint." Murmuring, the leader felt Jaejoong's body respond, a heaviness trapped between their pressed in bodies. "So if it wasn't Changmin, who was it?"

"Rain." Jaejoong listened expectantly for Yunho's curse. He wasn't disappointed. The leader responded with one nearly immediately.

"What did that asshole want?"

"He wanted to know if we had someone talking about him." Jaejoong snuggled into Yunho's grasp, luxuriating under the feel of his lover's hands roaming over his rear and back. "He seems to think that we've got someone sniffing around him. Asking about Minnie-ah."

"Someone's asking about him and Changmin?" Yunho frowned, his thoughts racing.



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“No, there wasn’t any mention about Min. Just someone asking if Rain liked virgins.” Jaejoong replied. “So Rain immediately thought about our Changmin and called me.”

“I think after what happened, Rain’s not going to look at another virgin for the rest of his life.”

“Probably not.” Jae allowed himself to be turned over onto his back, Yunho’s fingers stroking at his stomach. “But why would someone start asking about Rain?”

“Could be because he’s an asshole?” Yunho tugged Jae free of his shirt, tossing the garment to the floor. “That’s better, Boo. I don’t know why you even wear anything to bed.”

“Because it’s cold.” Jaejoong snorted. “And stop for a minute. Do you think he hit on someone else? Do you think he hurt someone?”

“I don’t know, Boo.” The other man lay half on top of his lover, knowing the contact would alleviate Jae’s stress. “Do you want me to have someone we know ask? Rain’s been pretty mellow since that thing with Changmin. He didn’t even say much when we broke the stage he had to use after us.”

“I think he was more scared of you than anything else.” Yunho’s belly against him was too much to ignore and Jae ran his fingers along his lover’s ribs, outlining the hard muscles on Yunnies’ torso. “I know you hit him before those guys came around. He said that they broke his nose but I saw the mark on his skin. That was from your ring. I know that ring. It’s left its mark on me after we’ve made love and got too enthusiastic.”

“And you’ve never said anything?”

“What was I going to say?” Jae asked, sticking his tongue out at his partner. “Yunho, thanks for beating Rain up for Minnie. Or at least softening him up for the thugs Scarlet’s boyfriend sent over later?”

“I asked for no secrets between us and I kept that one.” Yunho at least had the decency to look contrite in the wash of moonlight in the room. “And for a long time. You told me about Scarlet’s guys.”

“That...well, let’s face it.” The singer made a face. “God, I didn’t want anything to happen to him. Not really. I didn’t want Rain to get hurt. I was happy you hit him. Hell, I wanted to hit him.”

“Well, those guys took care of it.” Yunho nestled into Jae’s side. “Did Rain ever tell you I hit him?”

“No,” Jae admitted. “But I think he was ashamed about it. He can kind of laugh off getting beat up by a bunch of guys but getting his nose broken by you would be too embarrassing for him. I thought he suffered enough.”

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“I don’t.” Yunho shrugged. “But I don’t forgive. Someone only has to smile at you and you forgive them.”

Jaejoong slapped his lover on the thigh. “I do not. I hold grudges.”

“Rarely.” The other man teased, his deep voice a pleasant rumble in Jae’s ears. “You never hold one against me.”

“That’s because I love you.” Jae retorted. “And I forgive all of the stupid things that you do. I have to. I love you.”



The town car glided smoothly through the streets, its driver a silent, stone-faced man that kept his eyes on the road and the privacy screen raised to block him from viewing the back. Se7en appreciated the man’s discretion. In fact, he wasn’t certain the driver spoke more than a few words. But then he wasn’t paying the man to talk. Dong-Wook was paying him to drive and keep mum about the young man with him.

His driver slowed the car when it got to the banks of the Sumida river, coming to a complete stop at one of the many gardens dotting its banks. With a short buzz of the intercom, the man informed Se7en that he would be taking his break and go looking for a cup of tea.

“I’ll be reachable through my cell phone, sir.”

“Ah, one thing,” Se7en said.

“Yes, sir?”

“I’d like for you to not have seen anything back here tonight.”

“Your car is driven by a blind man, Sir.”

The man walked away from the town car, distancing himself from the men sitting in back. With a push of a button, Se7en lowered the windows overlooking the garden and the river, a ribbon of gently moving waters stretching through the city.

“I have to go home soon.” Changmin whispered. “They’ll worry about me. I’ll start getting phone calls soon.”

“Can you stay about half an hour?” Se7en pulled the younger man into his lap, settling Changmin into the crux of his arm and stroking his fingers on the back of Min’s neck. “I can get you home before midnight.”

“Midnight sounds fine, Mitsu.” The other man’s touch left Min’s belly in knots and turned his legs into jelly. “I think if I stay with you any longer, I won’t want to leave.”

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“I like the sound of that.” Se7en replied. “Now, lean a bit, Iro. My mouth’s lonely without you.”

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# 11

He would draw out his kisses, Se7en thought, prolong them until the young man sitting sideways on his lap shivered and mewled. That was his plan. It was a good one, he surmised. He hadn't planned on his own body trembling with anticipation before he even brushed his fingertip along Changmin's lips.

There was still a dusting of sugared ice on the younger man's mouth, a fleck or two that sparkled under the town car's open moon roof. Se7en's tongue made a slow journey over the pale translucent shimmer, his throat opening under the low murmur of his moan.

Changmin answered, a gasping rush of eroticized whisper begging Se7en for more. The younger man's fingers worked at the buttons of Se7en's shirt, undoing the top few so he could touch the heated skin beneath. Emboldened, Min bent slightly, and licked at the golden stretch peeking out from behind Se7en's collar. The young man was rewarded by a tremor rocking Se7en's body and the older man's hands convulsing over Min's hips.

"God, the things your mouth does to me." Se7en whispered.

Resting his head back against the black leather seat, he willed himself to stay still as Min explored the small patch of skin with tentative licks of his tongue. He nearly lost all control when Changmin's teeth nipped a tiny pinch of skin and the young man rolled it lightly before releasing it again, covering the tender area with a gentle kiss.

"I'm not going to keep my promises to you." Se7en's eyes were black, swallowed whole with need. "You keep doing that and I'm not going to be able to stop, I swear to you. I won't be able to."

"You promised." Min murmured. He liked the power he had over Se7en, a writhing length of hard muscle and hot pressing flesh against his own body. There was a delicate balance of trust and surrender between them now. Se7en ached and moaned under his touch, held by a thin thread of words and self-control. Min wondered how far he could push Se7en until the other man broke down and took what he wanted.

Changmin wondered if he would even care if Se7en took what he wanted.

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Another button fell to the wayside under Min's shaking fingers and Se7en's chest was bare under Changmin's hands. Pushing the shirt away, Changmin stared down at the other man's bare torso, entranced by the differences from his own leanness.

"Do you want me to take it off the rest of the way?" Raw with need, Se7en's voice asked Min.

Swallowing hard, Min nodded then whispered softly. "Yes."

Dong-Wook stripped the garment from his body, letting the shirt slither to the floor. Nude to the waist, the singer leaned back to let Min explore him. Unwilling to trust himself, Se7en hooked his fingers into Min's leather belt, wrapping his fingers into the other man's pants loops.

"You're so pretty." Min murmured, tracing over Se7en's collarbone. Leaning slightly to the side, he examined Se7en's tattoo, following the lines of the cleft with his finger tip. "There's a seven in the wing. I never knew that."

"Does it taste different than the rest of your body?" Min asked softly.

"Why don't you try and find out?" Se7en's voice ran deep, a solemn thrum under his words.

Changmin's face reddened as he ducked his head down, his body supported by Se7en's arms. The inked area tasted of spice and a tang of citrus, leaving a sweetness on Min's tongue. Following the line of Se7en's shoulders with a path of butterfly kisses, Min worked over the other man's chest, exploring the various tastes he found there.

He was doing wonderfully, he thought, until his tongue flicked over the darkened plum of Se7en's taut nipple.

Things went to Hell and Heaven at that point. Changmin wasn't sure which.

Se7en's hands left their prison, winding their way up Min's shirt and around his slender waist. Capturing Changmin's mouth, Se7en slid the young man back onto the wide seat, tucking him against the leather and trapping Min with his heavier body.

"You're making me crazy, iro." Se7en bit down hard into the soft column of Min's neck, driving his teeth together until he heard Changmin mewl, the younger man's body twitching with desire under the length of Se7en's legs.

"Touch me." Min stroked at Se7en's arm, fondling the man's skin.

"Let me touch you then, Minku." Se7en whispered into Changmin's mouth, licking at the back of the younger man's teeth. "Let me hear you cry my name."

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Changmin's shirt fell from his body, worked loose from his chest and pulled free from his waistband. Se7en spent a good long minute staring down at the lean young man framed against the fine black leather, the moon pouring in from the open roof. Light picked up the faint brown freckles on Min's shoulders,

"Junsu's right. I'm fucking insane." Changmin let himself fall into Se7en's mouth and the roughness of Se7en's wide hands. Calluses burned fire along Min's chest, pulling at the turgid peaks on his pectorals. Se7en pinched at the nubs, following behind his fingers with a moist tongue and sharp teeth.

There didn't seem anywhere that Min could grab and hold onto, the other man's shoulders and hair proving to be poor purchase for his desperate hands. The leather was too slick and he slid down under Se7en's embrace, being led down until he was nearly prone, his knees bent slightly between Se7en's legs.

"Will you let me touch you where I want to, Minku?" Dong-Wook's purr was back, hooking into Min's soul. Changmin couldn't do anything but nod, his eyes wide and a willing tremble on his lips. "Good. Lean back, baby. Let me show you pleasure."

No one ever touched Min like that before. He'd had stylists and fashion coordinators handle his body and for some strange reason, he thought the feel of another's hands would have the same detached coldness of the people who manipulated how he looked.

As a torrential burn worked under his skin, Min wondered how the hell he ever thought Se7en touching him would be a cold, unemotional thing. The older man's fingers were finding spots on his body that he hadn't even been aware of, stroking out each nerve ending until it tingled. And then Se7en's hands found the hitch of his belt buckle and Min's body shook with apprehension and fear.

"Relax, Minku." Se7en moved over Changmin's body, raising up onto his hands and brushing Min's mouth with his own. Giving the younger man a leisurely kiss, Se7en calmed Min's taut nerves, taking some time to stroke away the trembling waves of goosebumps over Changmin's skin.

"Do you trust me, Minku?"

Yes, Min sighed in his head. No, his gremlin corrected. But we should. Just shut up and let him do what he wants. What the hell are we waiting for?

"Yes." Changmin said into Se7en's kiss, his lips briefly enveloping the tip of the older man's tongue.

The sound of his zipper being undone froze Min's brain. Se7en's hands working under his waistband melted him, the older man's murmur urging

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Changmin to lift up his hips. He wasn't ready for this, his mind screamed, it's too fast. Too much. Too quick. Too scary.

"I don't know," Min whispered. The fear in his voice was a tangible sheet, stopping Se7en's hands.

"Baby, I'm not going to do anything but bring you pleasure." Dong-Wook promised, placing a gentle kiss on Min's exposed hip bone. "This is going to be just for you. Let me show you how good this is going to feel. Trust me."

"Don't hurt me." Changmin wasn't sure if he was talking about his body or his heart. Everything had become so clouded in his mind. He could no longer work out his feelings under the rush of sensual pleasure Se7en gave him.

Don't let me fall in love with him, Min begged himself. Please don't let me think that just because he likes me and wants me that I get fooled into thinking that he'll be here forever. We have different lives, different wants. Let me just love him for who he is and not dream up a fantasy that will melt in the rain.

God, don't let him stop touching me, was Min's final thought before Se7en's mouth descended on his smooth hips.

Se7en tongued down the dark hair on Min's underbelly, laving at the strands until they lay wet on his skin. Inhaling the younger man's musky scent, Se7en could nearly taste the sweet promise of Min's flesh, a soft silken length hardening under his fingertips.

Changmin's shaft dewed under Se7en's thumb, the older man spreading the moisture around the satin head, running around the ridge and down the thick vein stretching around Min's width. The glistening pearl drop called to Se7en, a more delectable treat than the sugar frosting Min's lips or the creamy pull of whipped froth of the cheesecake they shared.

Min wasn't sure what to do with his hands. He found out they knew exactly what they wanted to do when his fingers gripped the back of Se7en's head, working down into the other man's long, black hair.

He'd nearly wept when Se7en licked at the head of his sex.

He more than cried out when the older man's mouth suckled at the tip and then slid Min down into his throat, closing over the sensitive tip and working at the head with the rough back of his tongue. Electricity cracked along Min's brain, his thoughts forming and then shorting out.

Changmin knew he wouldn't survive Se7en's touch. He wasn't going to get out of this as he went in. There was something dark and sensual unfolding in his body and taking over every inch of his blood. Min felt it searing and bubbling under the surface and he half-feared it would consume

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him before he could fully discover the pleasures Se7en promised to give him.

No, he was going to cry, Changmin told himself, tears streaming down his face. Might as well accept that he was purely liquid in Se7en's hands and mouth. Pure, molten hot glass poured into a softening gelatin form. Min was surprised he didn't burst from Dong-Wook's ministrations. He sure to sear the other man's mouth just with the heat pouring up from his crotch.

Then Se7en drew back and blew on the wet head before licking around its rim. Min was given the briefest of moments to regain his sanity, then lost it under the earth-shattering sensation of Se7en's mouth closing down around him again, the tip of the older man's tongue flicking across the tender sensitive skin at the base of his shaft, fingers exploring the tight sac rolling in Se7en's palm.

The madness continued for far too short a time in Min's mind. And far too long of a time for the hyper-sensitive flush of skin around his sex. Each dip of Se7en's head brought a rush of delight, needles drawn over his skin at the merest brush of Se7en's teeth.

"Se7en..." Min gasped, gripping at the older man's shoulders. "I can't..."

"Let go, baby." Dong-Wook whispered into the crease of Changmin's groin. "Just let go. I want to watch you."

If Changmin ever had a chance to sip at a star, he knew it wouldn't ever come close to the tidal wave of pleasure hitting his body. It unfurled from the centre of Se7en's mouth, working outwards in a spiral pattern, overlapping the previous circle until he couldn't tell which way his body was turning to respond to the vibrations caused by the other man's tongue and hands. Min lost count of how many times his hips jerked, his sex releasing hot seed into the curve of Se7en's throat, the older man's eyes on Min's tightly clenched lips that finally broke open under the mewling cries for Se7en's pleasure.

Gasping, he drew back, slightly horrified and more than a little bit secretly pleased when Se7en licked away the milky fluid his body spilled, Min's hips held firm between Se7en's strong hands. The older man wouldn't let Changmin go, sucking out each pearl from Min's sex until the head ran red from Se7en's licking.

"There you go, baby." Se7en purred, tracing along the vein of Min's softening shaft, licking the young man clean. "God, you are gorgeous. I don't know why you ever thought you weren't pretty. You are so damned deliciously beautiful."

He thoroughly enjoyed the sweetness of Min's seed, mingled with the musky sweat pooled along the younger man's long thighs. Nothing sounded better to his ears than Changmin panting his name, begging him to continue then begging him to stop before Min spilled into his mouth.



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No, Se7en loved taking Min into his throat and tasting the young man down into his belly. It would flavour his memories for the rest of time.

“God,” Changmin tried to catch his breath, his lungs strained and worked hard under Se7en’s ministrations. “You didn’t... Se7en, you didn’t...”

“Baby, I get pleasure from watching you. I’m not going to be able to wear these pants again without thinking of how you made me lose it just from watching your face.” Se7en traced up Min’s body, sucking at the young man’s mouth. “Believe me, Minku. I’m going to have to throw out the underwear I’m wearing. I’m going to get hard every time I even look at it in my dresser drawers.”

“We’re both in your mouth.” Min said, surprised. The salty-sugar taste of his own seed lay under the spicy anise flavour of Se7en’s mouth, shocking him.

“I’m not even going to start imagining how good you’re going to taste with me in your mouth.” Se7en sighed, reluctantly working Min’s clothes back on. “It’s past midnight, Minku. I have to take you home.”

“I wish I didn’t have to go.” Changmin whispered. “And that sounds like I’m a clinging brat.”

“Oh no,” Se7en refuted, resolutely sitting up and drawing Min along. “It sounds like a lot of fun and a promise of breakfast served on your naked body. You’re driving me crazy just by being next to me. If I don’t return you soon, I’m not going to let you go until I can’t walk anymore. And I think I’d still chase you down, crawling after you on my hands and knees.”

“That would be bad. I’d miss watching you dance.” Min said, his hands working hard to button Se7en’s shirt closed. “I can’t do this. I’m still shaking.”

“I like making you shake, Minku.” Se7en stole a kiss from Changmin’s pout. “And do you know what’s going to be even better?”

“What?” Min whispered, anticipating Se7en’s words with a shiver.

“I can’t wait to feel you trembling while I’m deep inside of you,” Se7en bit the small purpling spot he’d left on Changmin’s throat. “And god, I just can’t wait to feel you shake when I have you. If doing this made you look that angelic, making love to you is going to be like seeing God.”

“You are going to be the closest I ever get to Heaven, Minku.” Se7en whispered. “And I’ll gladly go to Hell for touching you, baby. Shit, I don’t care if I damn everyone around me just for the taste of you. Just so long as I get you around me before I die.”

# 12

Changmin gently shut the front door, leaving off the lights as he made his way through the apartment. The other's bedroom doors were closed, dark along the seams. He bit down on his lip when he hit his shin on the coffee table, nearly tumbling against the wide chair set at an angle from the couch. Hissing in annoyance, Min crept into his room, making very little sound other than breathing a sigh of relief when he crossed the threshold into safety.

"You're late." His nightlight flooded on and an amused Junsu half-lay on his bed, feet crossed over at the ankles and mouth pursed with disapproval. "And you have a small hickey on your neck."

"Junsu!" Changmin shut the door behind him, shushing the older man. "What the hell are you doing in here? Waiting up for me?"

"Someone had to." The tenor shrugged, pulling his feet up and patting the mattress. "Better me than Jaejoong, no?"

"Gods," Min rolled his eyes. "No, I don't want Joongie-ah waiting up for me. That would mean Yunho too."

"Sit down, let me see your neck."

"No!" Changmin scolded, slapping away Junsu's hand as the other man made a grab for his leg when Min passed him. "Let me take a shower. And then I'll talk to you."

"Why do you need a shower?" Junsu sniffed at Min, earning himself another slap.

"Stay here." Changmin ordered the older man. "Shut up and wait until I get back."

The bathroom was a quiet retreat away from the weighted discussion Min knew he was going to have with Junsu. At the moment, he just wanted to lean against the tiled walls and relive the evening spent with Se7en. His body was still tender, nearly too sensitive to touch and he willed his fingers to run a soaped washcloth gently around his flaccid form, breathing in sharply at the tingled warning his nerves shot off when he rubbed a bit too hard.

He'd spent more than a few times with his hands before but never to the peak that Se7en seemed to push him to. Those few moments seemed to be

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a distant haze, rolled over flat by the overwhelming expulsion of his pleasure. Just remembering the warmth of Se7en's mouth and hands made him twitch, the tender knob jerking in response to his rambling thoughts.

Focus, Min scolded himself. What are you trying to do to yourself? Self-control, remember that? I was going to be self-controlled about this.

Who was he kidding? His self-control ended the moment Se7en claimed a kiss from his butter-drenched mouth.

"What the hell am I doing?" He said aloud. "Se7en's just... fooling around. He can't be serious about this. He can't stay interested in someone like me. I didn't even do anything for him."

"Shit, he was interested in Jaejoong. I can't compete with someone like Jae. Hell, I can't even compete with Yoochun. And he's goofy looking." Biting back his worries, Min sat down on the shower shelf, letting the water beat down on his hunched over shoulders. Shanks of his hair covered his face, clinging to his neck and falling forward while he stared down at the water swirling down the drain.

"Damn it." Changmin rubbed at his face, pressing at his eye lids and sighed. "What the hell?"

"Se7en? Do I believe him when he tells me that I'm worth something?" Min asked the flowing water. It remained as mute as the gremlins in the back of his head. Even his insanities had abandoned him. "I didn't used to be like this. I never doubted myself before the group. Is being around the others making me less of who I am?"

No, stupid. A whispering slither of a voice echoed in the recesses of his mind. You're making yourself less than you are.

Ah, Min sighed, it's good to know that my madness is still there to tell me I'm an idiot.

So what then? I keep comparing myself to them. I look at who I am and say, I'm just not good enough. Min sat back, thinking of the other members of the group.

I'm not Yunho. He's strong and arrogant. People look at him and they see someone who's self-confident and masculine. But he's goofy sometimes too. He never questions what he's doing once he's made up his mind. Yunnie-ah pushes ahead and just does where I have to sit and rethink things over and over.

Jaejoong. Min sighed. God, he's like my brother. And I can never understand why people flock to him and he hides away. I used to think he was so cold, too distant because of the walls he has and then suddenly when I'm crying, he's the one who feels for me the most. Why do I keep looking at him and seeing what I want to be like in others' eyes? Sometimes

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it would be nice to be that alluring and that distant. When I try to be mysterious, people think I'm sullen. I definitely can't pull off enigmatic.

Junsu and Yoochun were the same coin but different sides. Junsu is silly and focused. And Yoochun is unfocused and emotional. But they're so much alike. I can't be as charismatic as Junsu. I try but I don't fit into the cute mold. I don't know why I even try. I can't compete there either.

And no one can compete with Yoochun for the overwrought, playful goofball. He doesn't think. He just acts. And everything just falls into place for him. I have to think everything through or it all blows up in my face.

"And now you're sitting in a shower stall in Japan with a hickey on your neck while one of your group members is waiting on your bed for you to come in and tell him how a date was." Changmin puffed out his cheeks and sighed. "How crazy has my life gotten?"

"You like Se7en, Shim." Changmin admonished himself. "He's funny and sweet. He listens to me and asks questions. He admits when he doesn't know something and..."

"And he makes me feel like I'm the only one that matters when I'm around him." Min whispered. "Is that so wrong to want? Even if it's not a forever thing like Jaejoong and Yunho, can't I have that feeling for just a while? I know it's going to hurt when he gets tired of me. I know that. And I don't believe him when Se7en says that he'll be my friend afterwards. Men lie. Hell, I lie."

"Am I lying when I say I don't want to fall in love?"



Junsu watched Min's face when the younger man came back into the bedroom. Changmin's eyes were reddened as if from crying. Sitting up, Junsu pulled Min down beside him, laying the youngest onto the mattress.

"Did he make you cry?" The tenor asked roughly, all hints of the cute goofy shredded from his voice. "I'll fucking kill him."

"You really have to stop swearing." Changmin hiccupped. "No, Se7en didn't make me cry."

"No, no, no!" Junsu shook his head. "Not his name. We're never saying his name. It's like a curse."

"I'm not going to keep calling Dong-Wook *him* just because you don't want to say his name. Get over it."

"Why are you crying then?"

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“I’m crying because I’m an idiot.” Changmin slid up his bed until his head rested on the pillow. Junsu lay down next to him, wiping at the younger man’s lashes.

“Shit, you are falling in love with him. I knew it.”

“I’m going to hit you.” Min warned. “No, I don’t think I’m falling in love. I think I have to learn to like myself first.”

“Eh?”

If he hadn’t been fighting the hiccups, Min was certain he would have choked after seeing the confused look on Junsu’s face.

“I can’t fall in love, Susu-ah.” Changmin said. “I don’t love myself. Hell, I don’t even like myself.”

“You don’t make any sense.” Junsu worried at Min’s words until he came back to his initial conclusion. “No, how can you not like yourself? You’re the best one of us. Okay, maybe after Yunho but still.”

It was Changmin’s turn to regard Junsu as if he’d grown a second nose on his face. “What are you talking about?”

“You’re always the smart one. You make the rest of us feel like we’re stupid. And you’re cute.” Junsu snorted. “If you danced better, I’d have to smother you in your sleep. Thank God you’re as clumsy as Jaejoong.”

“Hey, I’m not that bad.” Changmin stuck out his tongue. “Okay, maybe just a little bit but I’m still better than Jaejoong.”

“People always ask you questions if they want a good answer. And you get picked to speak for the group if we’re introducing something.” Junsu pointed out. “And no one wants you to be anything other than you. Everyone keeps looking at the four of us like if they scratch at us just right, they’re going to find some sort of treasure underneath. People see you and are happy with who you are.”

“I don’t know who I am.” Min admitted. “Sometimes I feel like I’m just someone stuck in between Jaejoong and Yunho so they don’t jump on top of each other during interviews.”

“Please, if anyone is going to jump on each other,” Junsu scoffed. “It would be me and Yoochun.”

“Can we not talk about you and Yoochun jumping each other?” Shuddering, Changmin replied. “I heard Jaejoong yelling at you this morning for something. I’m afraid to sit on things around here sometimes. And I hate sharing a bathroom with the two of you.”

“He yelled at me for leaving a cup on the table.” The older man protested. “You’ve got a dirty mind.”

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“Probably to go with that hickey you have on your neck,” Junsu said slyly, lightly touching at the purpled mark. “If one of the hyungs see it, you’re going to have think fast.”

“I know.” Min frowned. “My hair is long enough. I can hide it for a couple of days. It should fade by then. We don’t have to do anything until Saturday. I’ll be safe until then.”

“Do you have to practice any routines?” Junsu quirked his mouth, trying to recall their schedule. “You always pull your hair back for that. That would be the last thing you’d want.”

“No, that’s just for you, Yoochun and Yunho.” Min said. “We clumsy members don’t have to be there. We’re to stay in the back with the other dancers to make you look good.”

“Then you’ll be fine.” Junsu studied the bruise. “It’s not that big. Why isn’t it bigger? Did you stop him? Did he want to stop?”

“First you’re upset because I have one and now you’re complaining because it’s not big enough? Min gaped at the other man, incredulous at Junsu’s prodding. “Aren’t you ever satisfied?”

“No,” The other teased, wiggling his eyebrows. “That’s why I’m up and Yoochun’s fallen asleep from exhaustion.”

“Aish, you’re horrible.”

“Answer the question.” Junsu poked the youngest in the ribs. “Did you not like him chewing on you?”

“I liked it.” Min flushed, brilliant red against his pale cream linens. “He...um... went to chew on somewhere else.”

“Minnie-ah!” Junsu crowed loudly, hushing only when Changmin’s hands flew up to cover his mouth. “So, you aren’t...?”

“I don’t want to talk about all of it.” Min shook his head. “But no, we didn’t do everything. But I wanted to. It’s too private. And you’ll make fun of me.”

“I won’t.” Junsu promised, crossing his heart with his finger. “Was it nice? Did you return the favour?”

“I did want to. He made me feel like everything inside of me wanted to be wrapped around him. Or him wrapped around me. I’m not too sure.” Changmin nodded. “But I was late as it was and he said that it could wait. He wanted me to feel like I was the center of the evening.”

“Shit, that’s smooth.” Junsu narrowed his eyes. “I don’t trust him.”

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“He gave me pleasure and wants to take things slow between us and you don’t trust him?” The younger singer sighed heavily. “You really aren’t ever satisfied.”

“Why kind of guy passes up something for himself?”

“Oh, I don’t know... someone nice?” Min cocked his head, wrinkling his nose. “Se7en’s nice. He talks to me. And listens. You have no idea how nice it is to have someone listen.”

“We listen to you.” The tenor protested.

“I have to yell to be heard above the four of you.” Changmin replied. “Most of the time, I don’t bother. I don’t have anything important to say. It’s just nice to sit and talk to someone who is quiet and actually pays attention to what I’m saying. I don’t have to fight other voices for attention. I like that.”

“I could pay attention to you, if you wanted.” Junsu said softly.

“Junnie-ah, I love you. I do.” Min patted his friend on the shoulder. “But I’m not who you pay attention to. And that’s okay.”

“I guess I don’t like the idea that you’re going to Se7en for attention.” Junsu admitted, his voice soft with emotion. “It’s like you have to go outside of the group for something and it feels wrong.”

“I’d have to go outside of the group anyway. Regardless if it is Se7en or someone else.” Changmin reminded his friend. “There are five of us. You have Chunnie-ah. There’s no one else in the world for Jaejoong and Yunho. There isn’t room in your relationships or hearts for me and I don’t want any of you that way. I’m not going to find someone to give me hickeys in the group. Well, not and be normal.”

“I like being normal, Junsu.” Min laughed at Junsu’s sour face. “I like being on stage and performing but when it’s all over, I like just stepping back and being able to go shopping for a book or listen to a concert on the lawn. Tonight I went to a carnival with Se7en and it was just so nice to walk around and do stupid, simple things. He won me a kumiho. Sorry, kitsune here.”

“What, you bring a fox into our house?” Junsu acted outraged. “You’d best keep him from our bunny.”

“He’s a good fox.” Min reached over Junsu’s body and dug the toy out of his jacket pocket. Holding up the plushie for Junsu to see, he wiggled the fox’s tails over the other’s nose. “They’re supposed to be wise. I’ll have to look up the legends. I’m sure he’ll behave.”

“It’s nice.” Junsu took the kitsune, stroking down the fur on its nose. “And he won this? How?”

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“Throwing baseballs at bowling pins to knock them over.” Changmin accepted the kitsune back. “And I felt like a little kid. It’s so stupid and boys shouldn’t feel like they’re turning into porridge when someone wins them a toy. But I did.”

“I felt like that when Yoochun told me to pick out the toy I wanted.” Nodding, Junsu smiled, a soft gentle sweep of his mouth over his face. “And he told me that I should have picked out the prettiest one, not the goofiest looking one. I told him that it was supposed to remind me of him so that’s why I picked out the bunny, because it was silly.”

“Truth is,” He continued. “I picked it out because it looked like it didn’t fit with the others and it was lonely. Like Yoochun looked when we first met him. I wanted to take that look off of Chunnie’s face when I saw him. I still do whenever he gets lonely. The bunny too.”

“It doesn’t look lonely to me.” Min said, pressing his forehead against Junsu’s. “It looks very happy. So does Yoochun. You’ve made them both happy.”

Junsu’s reply was lost under the chirp of Changmin’s phone. Grinning, the tenor flattened himself against the bed so Min could reach over him to retrieve the cell. Flipping it open to answer the ring, Min shoved at Junsu’s shoulder, sending the older man further along the bed.

“Hold on,” Min said into the receiver. Pointing to the door, he motioned at it for Junsu. “Get out.”

“I want to stay and listen.” Junsu said, making kissing noises with his mouth. “I might learn something.”

“Out, Junnie-ah.” Changmin laughed. “I’ve seen the magazines you have hidden in your room, remember? You don’t need me to teach you anything.”

“Fine.” The older man slid off the bed, making a great show of trudging to the door. Sighing as he entered the hallway, Junsu shut the door behind him, shuffling down to the hall to his room and sleeping lover.

“Hey.” Changmin said into the phone, reaching up to turn off the lamp on the night stand. Lit only by the ambient glow of the cell’s screen, the room turned into a soft cocoon, a blanket of shadows tucked around Min’s long body.

“Hey yourself, Minku.” Se7en replied.

He still purrs, Min said to himself. Every time he says my name, it feels like a purr.

When did Minku become my name? The gremlin grumbled, affronted at the diminutive. Shim Changmin. Or just Changmin. Even Min.



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Shut up. It's nice, Changmin shushed the reptilian voice. "I'm worried about thinking that your voice purrs when you say my name."

"Do you realize that you said that aloud, Minku?" Se7en laughed, a rumbling chuckle.

"No. Shit." Min swore again, rubbing at his forehead. "You're making me red again. Stop it."

"I like it when you blush. If my hands are on you, I can feel the heat under my fingers when the pink runs under your skin." The other man murmured. Shifting against his pillows, Se7en closed his eyes, imaging the lean stretch Min's bones and muscles on a bed at the other end of the district. "Did you already take a shower?"

"Yes." Swallowing, Min rubbed at his mouth, still feeling the bite of Se7en's teeth along his upper lip. "Now I'm sorry I did. I feel like I washed you away."

"It's okay. You can't wash me away that easily, Min." Se7en reassured him, a soft gentle whisper in Min's ear. "We'll do that again sometime soon and fall asleep smelling like each other. It's a nice way to wake up."

"Sounds horrid." Changmin protested as Se7en laughed at him. "Hey, I don't like being smelly. I take a shower as soon as I get off stage."

"Sometimes, Minku," The other man said. "Being sweaty is nice. Getting sweaty is even better."

"Did you have fun tonight?" Se7en listened carefully to Min's breathing. The younger man's sigh was heavy, something weighting down his already serious minded thoughts. "You're not regretting tonight, are you?"

"Yes, you made me feel like I was on fire. And no, I'm not regretting tonight but I might be regretting tomorrow." Changmin replied. "I feel like I'm clinging when I tell you how I feel but then I feel like I'm not giving you enough credit if I don't talk to you about it."

"Talk to me, baby." Dong-Wook said into the phone, cradling it against his cheek. "I don't think you're clinging to me. You're trying out new and different things with me. If you don't ask questions or tell me how you feel, how am I suppose to know what's making you feel good or uncomfortable?"

"Because it's like you read my mind?" Changmin snorted. "I swear I have to check my forehead to see if what I'm thinking is written there."

"Just when you blush." Se7en replied. "And you do that very prettily. I like it. What do you feel uncomfortable about? Anything you did tonight?"

"No," Min said, dropping his voice down. "I liked what we did tonight. A lot."

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“I’m worried that I’m attaching too much to you, looking to you for things when I should look to myself for them.” Changmin continued. “I told Junsu tonight that I couldn’t fall in love because I realized when I was in the shower that I don’t think I even like me. I keep looking at everyone else and seeing pieces of who I want to be instead of looking at myself and saying, I should be happy with who I am.”

“Baby, do you even know who you are?” Se7en asked. “I think who you see are only the things you want to change and not any of the things that make you special. I like the Changmin I know. I wish you’d get to know him too.”

“Blech. He’s a brat.” Min replied. “I feel like I’m whining. I hate whining. I hate it when Yoochun does it and I want to smack Junsu across the back of the head when he does it. I don’t want to hear me doing it to.”

“You’re not whining.” Se7en couldn’t help but smile. Did he have as much angst as the so-serious young man he’d grown fond of? Returning to the conversation, Se7en said. “You’re at a point in your life when you’re going to question things. Hell, Minku, I’m surprised you’re doing this now. You’ve done everything else so damned early.”

“Mitsu!”

“That’s my baby. You’ve even started scolding me.” Se7en teased. “I’m serious. Look at what you’ve done. And how young you are. You don’t think that it’s normal for you to start asking questions about where you want to go and who you want to be?”

“Did you?” Min asked. “Question, I mean.”

“Yeah, baby. I did. I still do.” Se7en said. “That’s not going to go away. Did you think that once you turned eighteen you were somehow going to get all the answers?”

“No,” Changmin snorted then thought on it. “Yes. Somehow, I guess. I don’t know.”

“None of us have any answers, Minku. We just all go forward and hope for the best.” Se7en thought about how cocky he’d been at Changmin’s age, stretching himself too thin until he nearly snapped apart. “Some, like you, explore the world around them or dig inside of themselves looking for answers. You’ll be farther ahead of the rest of us idiots who run around trying to be cool or the best at something trivial and when we find out how empty that all is, we turn around and start crying about how we wasted our lives.”

“Took me a long time to figure out that no one was going to hand me the world and if I wanted anything from it, I’d have to reach for it.” The older man said. “And that I couldn’t be an asshole. I had to treat other people with

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respect and remember that I wasn't the centre of the universe. You already know all of those things. So see, baby, you're much farther ahead of the rest of us."

"I don't feel farther ahead." Changmin buried his face in his pillow, trying to stave off the rush of heat in his body. "Tonight, I felt like I was..."

"Inexperienced?"

"No, stupid for not knowing what to do." Min admitted. "Or how to make you feel like you made me feel."

"You can learn that, Minku." Se7en assured his lover. "The hardest thing is remembering that you can't be thinking only about yourself. You have to think about your partner first. And to find someone who thinks about you. I don't mind waiting, baby. I like seeing you open up and bloom underneath me. It's an incredible feeling knowing that I'm the first one to bring those noises out of your mouth or to give you those sensations across your body. That's a pretty big thing for me. And I want it to be very good for you."

"You don't mind," Min sighed. "Doing this with me."

"I can't think of anyone else I'd rather have with you, baby." Se7en said.

"What if I fall in love with you?" Changmin asked, a soft trembling whisper. "What if I do that because I can't stop myself? Then what?"

"I don't know." Se7en admitted. "But neither one of us have answers for how we're going to feel. We like one another. We enjoy each other's company. Hell, sometimes I'm doing something and I think; Ah, I've got to tell Minku about this."

"I do that all the time with the other members." Changmin laughed. "Or I'll see something that I have to buy because it reminds me of them. Like the kitsune reminded me of you."

"I've never had that, Minku." Se7en explained. "You're the first person I've wanted to tell you about the stupid little things in my life. Or wanted to win a seven-tailed fox because it reminded him of me. So, Minku, you and I are in the same boat. Are we becoming as close as you are to the other members of your group or are we going someplace that we'll both either regret or be happy about?"

"I don't know." Min replied, his heart beating in his chest. He was suddenly afraid, staring at a misty emptiness in front of him.

"Neither do I, baby." Se7en murmured. "Honestly, I don't really care if it's one or the other. You and I...we'll work this out for us, between us. I can promise you that I'll be here even after we might drift away or you learn all you want to learn from me and find someone else you want to taste."

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“I just need you to promise to take a good look at who you are and accept that you’re someone I like spending time with. Not just kissing and licking, although those are nice too.” The other man pressed, his words sliding into Changmin’s mind. “No matter what happens, promise me that, baby. Or at least promise to try.”

Changmin’s eyes watered, his throat closing up around the tears that threatened to spill hot on his face. Se7en’s whispers gave him as much pleasure as his mouth had earlier, an anchor he clung to when the world got too turbulent.

“You there, Minku?”

“Yeah,” Min sniffed, smiling at the concern in Se7en’s voice. “And yeah, I promise.”

“Good.” Se7en said, satisfied at the strength he heard on the other side of the line. “Now, I’ve got to lie here awake thinking about you and you need your beauty sleep so I can lust after you tomorrow.”

“You’re silly.” Changmin rubbed at his nose, wiping at his face.

“You keep saying that.” The other man replied. “Must be true. Good night, Minku. I’ll call you tomorrow, well, later today. Maybe we can do something if you can get away from your surrogate parents.”

“I’ll have to check.” Min said. “And before I say goodnight, I have to tell you, you left a hickey on me. I’m going to have a hard time hiding it.”

“Ah, who else is looking at your thighs beside me?” Se7en laughed heartily at Min’s gasp of surprise. “Yeah, why don’t you go looking, honey. I’m going to bed. That one on your neck? It’s nothing compared to what else I left behind.”

# 13

Se7en rubbed at his eyes, plastering a wide smile on his face as another photo was slid in front of him. He no longer regretted using his stage name for a signature. The kanji was much easier to write after a few thousand times. Shifting, he tried to work feeling back into his rear, his legs nearly numb from sitting down for three hours. A whisper from his road manager told him that the line was nearly gone and soon, he'd be free to stand up.

If he could stand up.

Se7en never understood why other singers and actors complained about signings. His wrist did hurt from scrawling his name and his face always felt stretched out from smiling, not to mention being tired of answering the same questions time and time again but one thing remained firm in his mind.

If not for the people standing on the other side of the table, it wouldn't be his butt in the chair and his aching wrist signing Shichi-Sebun over and over again.

No, he was fine just where he was.

He took a moment between people to sign stock photos, tokens to be handed out at various events if he couldn't get to everyone. Shadowy forms broke the light in front of him and then a poorly printed bootleg copy of his CD was slid in front of him, a familiar, haunting husky voice saying his name.

"Se7en, you didn't sign this the other night."

Looking up, Se7en couldn't help but let his face crack into an actual grin, surprised and delighted to see the youngest member of Tohoshinki standing in front of him at his own signing. The young man was dressed down, a grey beanie pulled down over his forehead, a pair of brown-tinted oversized sunglasses hiding the crinkle of Min's almond-shaped eyes.

"Hey." Se7en knew his voice softened. He heard it. And he saw its effect on the young man's face, a lift of the edges of lips Se7en wanted to give a kiss hello.

Se7en hated being trapped behind a table and a narrow-minded society.

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Taking the CD from Min's hand, he turned it over, wincing at the smeared ink on its badly printed liner notes. Wagging the jewel case in the air, he crooked a playful smile at Min. "You sure you don't want one that looks better? Not like I don't have a lot of these."

"Nope." Min glanced behind him, sliding a peek around to the relatively short line creeping around the store's entrance. People stood at a distance, giving him some privacy. "That one has special meaning."

"I've missed you." Se7en whispered in Korean, just loud enough for the other man to hear. Bending his head down, the older singer scrawled his signature then wrote out a special message, leaving inked kisses and hugs along the edges of his own face. "This past week has been hell without seeing you."

"That's why I stood in line to see you." Min bent down, making a show of picking out a photo for Se7en to autograph. He lightly brushed against the other man's hand, inhaling at the spark arcing between them.

"Can you stay for a bit?" Se7en asked, smiling blandly to control a silly grin from eating up his face when the young man nodded. "I've got about ten or fifteen minutes after this signing. I can spend it with you in the waiting room. Then I've got to head to an interview. Unless you've got some place to be."

"No, I'm done for the week." Min nodded pleasantly. "Just tell your manager to take me to where you want to meet. I don't think they'll take my word for it that you're letting some young kid smuggle himself into your waiting area."

"Baby, if you could see yourself in those jeans, you'd understand why my manager would lock you in the car so you didn't escape." Se7en ran a smoldering look up Min's long legs, glimpses of tanned skin showing under tears in the worn denim. He didn't care who noticed at this point, especially when Se7en spotted a rip along the lower part of one back pocket as Min twisted to look down at his pants. A peek of red cotton flashed against the fold of Min's rear, dark blood-hued underwear disappearing again when Min turned back to face Se7en. "I'm surprised the girls in line didn't take you home with them."

"They tried." Changmin took the signed photo from Se7en's fingers, running his thumb over the man's palm before drawing back, the wicked gleam in his eyes hidden by the tint of his glasses. "But I told them I was holding out for you."



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“God, you’re a brat.” Se7en grinned as he closed the door to the waiting room behind him, firmly turning the deadbolt before stepping to embrace Changmin.

“Hello.” Min returned Dong-Wook’s smile with one of his own, a shy and pretty grin Se7en quickly kissed off of Min’s face.

“I’ve missed you.” Se7en leaned back against a table, cradling Min’s long body between his spread legs. Changmin looped his own arms around Se7en’s waist, letting the older man rock him back and forth in a loose embrace, just taking a moment to look at one another. “How have you been?”

“You talk to me every night.” Changmin laughed. “You should know how I’ve been.”

“How are you today then?” The older man nibbled on his friend’s nose tip, earning him a disgusted grimace from the fastidious Min. “What? Are you afraid I’m going to suck your brains out?”

“No,” Min replied. “Other things. Ick. Don’t do that. Suppose I didn’t wipe my nose enough.”

“That’s what I love about you, Minku.” Se7en licked at the corners of Changmin’s mouth. “You’re very practical.”

Changmin froze in Se7en’s arms, his face numbing as the weight of Se7en’s words sank into his mind. Clearing his throat, Min swallowed, his thoughts scattering under the chaos working quickly through his body.

“What’s that look for?” Se7en asked, bending back slightly to stare at Min’s shocked face. “Because I said that I loved something about you? We’ve been doing this for how long, Minku? Talking and sharing? You don’t think I’d love some things about you?”

“It just was,” Min whispered, moving his hands to the flat of Se7en’s chest. “I didn’t expect it. Just when I think I know where I stand, you move the rug.”

“That’s what you love about me.” Se7en teased. “Admit it.”

“No.” Min scowled, unwilling to let the older man have the upper hand. A nibble of Se7en’s teeth along the column of his neck changed his mind. “Yes. Shit.”

“I’m a bad influence on you.” The singer laughed against Min’s throat. “You never used to swear until you started talking to me.”

“I did swear.” Changmin replied. “Just now, I do it out loud.”

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“I’m sorry I don’t have much time to spend with you this afternoon.” Se7en frowned. “Everything just seemed to take off after we went to the carnival.”

“It did.” Min agreed, tracing over the other’s shoulders. He missed the feel of Se7en under his hands, letting his fingers roam where they could reach along the other man’s back. “We got pulled into doing more things, too.”

“Thank god for cell phones.” Se7en murmured, hooking his hands into Min’s back pockets and pulling the younger man closer. “And little minks that are willing to talk to me at three in the morning.”

“I’m beginning to think you never sleep.” Changmin complained. “The other members think I talk in my sleep. Yoochun heard me the other night and I had to pretend I was snoring when he came in. You must have thought I was crazy.”

“I was wondering what happened.” The older man nodded, finally comprehending the odd noises on the other end of the call. “I thought that maybe you were...enjoying the phone call a bit too much.”

“We were talking about books.” Min reminded him, snorting at Se7en’s salacious wink.

“You were talking about books. I had my mind on the talker of books.” Dong-Wook said. He lightly touched Min’s reddened cheeks, moving aside the sunglasses so he could get a better look at the younger man’s eyes.

“You have no idea how much I’ve wanted this.”

“Wanted what?” Min asked, canting his head in confusion.

Cupping Min’s rear, Se7en leaned the younger man into him, trapping Changmin’s lean body between his arms and sucked open the part of Min’s lips.

There was a sweetness to the young man’s mouth, still untouched by the jaded taint of age. The intimacies they’d shared under the stars of an open moon roof were pale ghosts when compared to the whispered confessions told over a phone line linking Min’s bedroom to Se7en’s flat.

“Damn, I swear to God, every time I kiss you, it’s like I’m tasting you for the first time.” Se7en murmured on Min’s panting mouth, drawing back and listening to Changmin’s beating heart. The older man ran his tongue along the lower pout of Min’s lips, leaving a trail of wet to blow on, something Se7en knew drove shivers down into Min’s bones.

“How does your schedule look?” Se7en asked before licking at the faint yellow mark left on Min’s neck. He chuckled when the young man jerked



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away and gave him a warning glare. “What? You didn’t mind the first time I left you marked.”

“I wasn’t thinking.” Min admitted. “Yunho saw it a couple of days later when it was just turning blue and I had to blame it on Jaejoong for hitting me during rehearsal. You’re lucky. I could have told Yunnie-ah that it was you.”

“You’d never do that to me.” The other pursed his lips, cocky and smug at the flushed look on Min’s face. “I am safe from Yunho as long as I keep you happy.”

“We were booked up but Junsu had to head back to Seoul for some family thing. Yoochun went with him.” Min said. “I think he missed the kim chee more than he would miss Junsu. But don’t tell them I said that.”

“And your parents?”

“Jaejoong and Yunho?” Min lightly punched Se7en’s shoulder. “Don’t call them that. Or I’ll start doing it and get into trouble with management. It’s hard enough keeping them hidden now.”

“What are they doing?” Se7en corrected himself.

“They are going to Okinawa.” Changmin said, a sly grin on his kiss-swollen lips. “They leave this afternoon and will be gone for two days.”

“So, you’re going to be left alone in Japan?”

“Our manager is still around.” Min reminded him. “He said he’d check on me if I needed anything.”

“So, again I say,” Se7en repeated. “You’re going to be left alone in Japan?”

“For a couple of day, yes.” Changmin agreed.

God, you’re dense, his inner voice whispered. Just tell him to come over and stay.

No, that’s a bad idea, Min thought, we’ll leave something for the others to find. Stuff like that always happens. Look at Yoochun and Junsu.

“And I’m stuck working.” Se7en mused. “I’m not going to get out of filming until late tonight.”

“Oh.” Changmin let out a small sigh of disappointment. He hadn’t planned on anything, not really; he said to himself. Just the chance to spend some time with Se7en without the others looking over his shoulder was nearly too much for him to resist.

“How about this?” The older man kissed at Min’s sad smile, hugging the singer to him. Digging into his pocket, he pulled out a set of keys strung over a ring. Dangling the knotted cord tied to the ring in front of Min’s nose,

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Se7en smiled. "I don't suppose you'd want to wait for me tonight? At my place?"

"I don't know..." The reality of an evening spent with Se7en suddenly struck Min hard. He wasn't ready for that. He wasn't sure he'd been ready for the pleasures Se7en gave him in the car. His body was still recovering its equilibrium sucked clean from it by Se7en's skillful mouth. Changmin wasn't sure he'd survive anything else at the moment.

"Baby, we don't have to do anything." Se7en tucked under his friend's chin, lifting Min's face up until he could see into the younger man's eyes. "I'm going to be dead tired and it's still too soon for you. I know that. I just want to spend some time with you. Share some take out. Maybe pass out on the couch and drool on your lap while you read a book."

"Would you like that, Minku?" The older man asked, watching Min's pretty face.

"Yes. It sounds...nice." He took the key from Se7en's hand, trembling as he closed it into his fist. The metal bit into his palm, reminding him of Se7en's teeth on his body. "I can cook dinner for you. If you want. It won't be anything like Jaejoong can cook but I can make something from home. Maybe even bulgogi?"

"Iro, I would love a home cooked meal." Se7en let out a sigh, releasing the breath he held tighter than he'd held the ring of keys between his fingers. "I don't know what I've got in the apartment. Mostly, I order in."

"I'll stop at the store." Changmin nodded. His heart seemed to have stopped. He was sure his heart stopped. He could no longer hear anything but the rush of wind in his ears and the gulping of his throat as it closed up around his words. Min wondered how long it would be before he just passed out in Se7en's arms.

"Breathe, baby." Se7en urged him, placing a gentle kiss on Min's chin. "Stay with me tonight. I just want to fall asleep talking and holding you. I'd like to wake up and find you in bed with me, even if it's six o'clock in the morning and I have to leave to do an interview."

"This is just moving so fast." Min whispered. "But we've known each other for a long time. Why is this scaring me?"

"Don't let it scare you." The other man reassured him. "You don't have to stay. Hell, you don't even have to show up. If you're not there when I get home, I'll understand, honey. It's okay."

"No, I'll be there." Min promised, tucking the key into his pocket. "I'll need your address."

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“Do you want me to send a car or are you going to take a cab?” Se7en found a piece of paper, scribbling down his flat address on the back of a flyer. “It’s on the top floor. The small key will unlock the elevator for you.”

“I’ll get a cab or take the train. I can stop and get something at the store first.” Finally inhaled deeply, Changmin’s lungs wept from lack of oxygen. “This sounds so... weird.”

“What?” Se7en tucked the folded address into Min’s pocket. “Dinner?”

“I’m scared.” Changmin said, his voice trembling. “But I’m okay. I mean, I know you’re not going to...”

“Force myself on you?”

“Yeah,” Min nodded. “I think I trust you.”

“Well, if it makes you feel better,” Se7en replied. “I have to trust you too.”

“What? How come?”

“Cause you’re making me dinner. You could poison me.” The older man ducked, pulling away from Min’s reach as the young man turned to grab at him. “And you’d be safe because you’ve eaten your cooking before.”

“Aish! You deserve to get sick.” Changmin pushed at Se7en’s shoulder, barely nudging the heavier man’s body.

“Choi-kun!” A masculine voice called through the locked door. “We have to leave now.”

“Damn.” Se7en grabbed Min’s wrist, pulling him close and stealing a lengthy kiss from his lover’s mouth. “The doorman has you on my list of visitors. If he asks, just tell him your name. He’ll show you up.”

“You’re pretty sure that I’d come over, huh?” Min cocked his head at Se7en, the older man reluctantly unlocking the door to the hall.

“Baby, I had your name on that list before I had furniture.” Dong-Wook winked. “I wasn’t sure of me. I was sure of you. See you tonight. And don’t poison me.”

# 14

“Damn.”

Changmin poked at the meat he'd marinated all afternoon. He wasn't sure if the beef was supposed to be the dark brown. He'd never seen bulgogi before Jaejoong cooked it. Looking at the recipe didn't help. There was no hint about what colour it should be once it was done marinating.

“Soy sauce, sesame seeds, sesame oil.” Min ran down the list, going over the ingredients. “I added the garlic, ginger and the sugar. Green onions. I didn't add the green onions.”

“When do I add the green onions?” Min stared down at the recipe, as if the piece of paper could answer him.

He'd nearly spilled the plastic container of raw bulgogi in the cab ride over. The driver's erratic steering flung him about the back seat, nearly tumbling Changmin to the floor. Stumbling from the back, Min nearly kissed the ground when the car finally lurched to a stop, the engine rumbling impatiently while he paid off the mad man who brought him to Se7en's doorstep.

Now he stood in a sleek, stainless steel and granite kitchen that Jae would moon over and he couldn't figure out if he should add green onions before or after he cooked the meat.

Leaning on his palms, the young man stared out of a wall of windows, a view of the river below accented by tall buildings just beginning to light up the sky for the night. Looking around at Se7en's apartment, he took in the clean lines of sleek furniture and wondered if Dong-Wook picked things out himself or if a designer had arranged the nearly zen-style setting for him.

Security didn't give Min a second glance when he'd come in balancing the container and grocery bags. The liveried guard merely called for the elevator, asking Changmin if he needed any assistance in carrying his food in and nodded curtly when Min declined.

Of course after thirty seconds of trying to get the elevator key to work, Min finally gave in and opened the elevator doors to beg for help. To his credit, one of the men merely strolled over and apologized for the stickiness of the lock and easily turned the access key for Min. Bowing deeply, the guard extended his regrets for the faulty elevator just as the doors closed.

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Min was certain the man would hold his stern face for at least a minute before laughing his head off at Min's ineptitude.

Much like the marinating bulgogi was doing.

He'd already burnt the rice twice. Min glanced guiltily at the blackened bottom sauce pan soaking in the sink.

"Who the hell doesn't own a rice cooker?" Changmin muttered at the pan. It was clearly to blame for his incompetence.

He'd looked high and low for a rice cooker but found nothing. Obviously, the designer who furnished the apartment forgot one of the most important items in a household. A quick search on the internet told him how to cook rice on a stove but he'd either added not enough water or set the fire too high. Min resigned himself to the first burning but the second incident frustrated him.

Running out of rice, he'd called the desk downstairs on the in-house intercom, hoping for directions to a local store to get a cooker. Salvation came in the form of a little squat white metal appliance with a glass top delivered nearly as soon as he hung up the phone.

Min would have to send the guards a thank you gift. He doubted that they would want a home-cooked meal after knowing he'd scorched his own rice twice.

The salad was easy enough, shredded cabbage, almonds and a rice vinegar dressing. That was supposed to marinate as well. And of course, more minced green onions.

"How long is a salad supposed to marinate?" Min sighed heavily, scanning the list. "At least forty-five minutes. Then add crumbled uncooked ramen noodles. Is this for real? What kind of recipe is this?"

He tossed the greens into a container and poured the dressing over it, then put the lid on it before sliding it into the nearly empty refrigerator. A glance at the clock told him he'd been there nearly two hours and still no sign of Se7en. But then, he thought as he stared at the darkening night sky, if he's at a shoot, he's going to be late. There's no way of knowing when one of those will end. There's always something coming up.

Taking one last nervous glance at the rice cooker, Changmin walked out of the kitchen, satisfied that at least the rice would turn out. He'd left his laptop and backpack on the coffee table by a wide, comfortable couch set in front of a bank of windows framing in the view of the river.

The living room was dominated by a wall of electronics, ranging from an enormous flat-screen television to mixing equipment, its sliders shiny from Se7en's fingers working the controls. Debating watching television or playing a video game, but neither appealed to him at that moment. The book

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he'd borrowed from Jaejoong seemed to be a better choice, a quiet reprieve from the noise surrounding his life. Getting a glass of iced tea from the ice box, Min settled down on the couch, pulling loose cushions around him and fell into the novel.

When Se7en walked into the apartment, the first thing he saw was Changmin sitting against the arm of the red couch he'd asked the designer to place near the corner windows. Damn, Dong-Wook stood in the foyer looking at the lean young man engrossed in his reading. Min's sweet face and bare feet were possibly the most erotic sights Se7en could have seen after the end of a very long day.

Leaving his keys on the counter, Se7en approached the younger man, gently placing a kiss on Min's exposed neck. Startled, Changmin looked up, his mouth moist where he dabbed his tongue against the swell of his upper lip. He pushed his wire-rimmed glasses back up his nose, unable to prevent a slight flush from pinking his cheeks.

"Hey, baby." Leaning against the back of the couch, Se7en rested his chin on his crossed arms and stared into Min's pretty face. "I'm sorry I'm late. And I just realized I should have called."

"It's okay." Changmin slid his glasses off, laying them on the coffee table. "What time is it?"

"Nearly ten." Se7en held his hand out for Min, pulling the young man free of the couch for a real kiss. Changmin was wearing the same pair of jeans he'd had on at the signing but now wore one of Se7en's t-shirts, the larger man's garment hanging on Min's slighter form. "God, you look good."

"Oh, I'm sorry. This is yours." Min looked down at the borrowed shirt. "I got shoyu on mine. I had to wash it. It's in the dryer."

"It's okay." Se7en pressed Min up against the pantry door, placing his hands on the younger man's hips. The sleek wood cabinet bit lightly into Min's back, his soft moan buried under the press of Se7en's mouth on his lips.

Changmin wondered when he lost control over his own body, his legs snug in the crux of Se7en's legs and his hands hooking into the other man's waistband. Drawing Se7en close seemed to be what his body wanted, despite the rational bits of Min's brain warning to be more aloof and detached.

Make him come to you; his mind said. Make him work for every kiss he gets from you.

Shut up; another voice reprimanded. Sit back there and shut up.

"You always look so serious." Se7en murmured after he left Changmin gasping, his mouth open and panting. "It's nice to see you like this, all

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flustered and ruffled. Makes me think that this is what I'm going to see when you're under me. All sweaty and panting and your hair all messy."

Min wasn't sure if there was any air left in his lungs. All he could feel was the tingle of his mouth and the ache in his chest. A thread of boldness surfaced in his spirit, a quiet urging for more of Se7en's musky sweetness on his tongue. Reaching up, Min wound his fingers into Se7en's hair and pulled the older man's face towards him, sucking hard on the bow of Se7en's full mouth.

Surprised, the older singer let Min draw him in, parting his mouth for Min's tongue to explore. They fought a battle at first, each struggling to dominate the angle of the kiss, ravenously consuming what little chill might have existed between their bodies until finally each surrendered to a slow seductive kiss, laving one another's mouth. Small nibbles of kisses left erotic snippets of sound in the air, lengthening with each caress.

Min's stomach declared an impasse, a rumbling growl to complain of its emptiness. Embarrassed, Changmin nearly pulled free from Se7en's embrace, stopped by the other's strong grip on his waist.

"Don't go away, Minku." Se7en sucked hard on Changmin's lobe, running his tongue on the soft downy skin below Min's ear. "When did you eat last?"

"I don't think I did eat today." Min admitted. "I was too nervous."

"Nervous?" Se7en quirked his mouth and Changmin wasn't sure if the man was teasing him or serious.

Teasing, Min decided when Se7en winked at him.

"I wasn't sure if you wanted to see me at your signing." Min admitted, reluctantly allowing Se7en to step away.

"You were the best thing of my day," Se7en replied. "Then my manager said that I didn't have to be anywhere until ten tomorrow and I could leave. When I came home and saw you here, that became the best part of my day. Opening the door and finding you silhouetted against the night sky, wearing those sexy glasses and with the lights finding every inch of beauty on your face, all I could think of was... damn, that's mine."

"Yours." Min cocked his head, regarding the other with a measuring look. Se7en had come to a stop in front of the rice cooker, staring at the white appliance as if someone had left a head on his counter.

"What?" Se7en turned, a perplexed look on his face. "Where did this come from? I've been meaning to get one. Did you bring it?"

"The guards downstairs got it for me when I asked them for where I could get some takeout rice since I burnt the first two batches." Min waved

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the rice cooker issue away with a flick of his fingers. "Let's go back to that mine thing you just said."

"What mine thing?" The older man leaned into the refrigerator, digging for two bottles of beer. Twisting the cap off of one, he handed it to Min, opening the other and taking a long draught.

Changmin set the beer on the counter, wiping at his mouth with the flat of his hand. "You said I was yours."

"You are mine." Se7en nodded as if the whole matter had been decided long ago. Finding the bulgogi container, Dong-Wook cracked open the lid and nearly swooned at the meat's aroma. "Is this beef? Let me give you some money for this. It must have been expensive."

"Choi!" Changmin pushed at the older man's shoulder, jostling Se7en into one of the fridge's wire racks. "Pay attention for a minute. You're worse than talking to Jaejoong."

"Ouch," Se7en winced playfully. "Now you're just being mean. What are you talking about, Minku?"

"I'm talking about what you just said to me a little bit ago." Min took the bulgogi container from Se7en's hands, suddenly not trusting himself to look at the man standing near him. "You said..."

"I know what I said, lover." Se7en whispered into Min's ear, standing behind him and wrapping his arms around the younger man's waist, cradling Min against his stomach. "We agreed, yes? No one else while we explore this."

"Yes," Min murmured, cracking back the lid of the container. "We did. I guess, I never expected to hear that from you."

"You should hear that from me all the time then." Se7en stuck his finger into the marinade, sucking the shoyu mixture off of his fingers. He ignored Min's warning slap against his wrist, swishing his finger back into the marinade and holding it up against Min's lips. "Suck this off of me."

There was a lot of weight in those words, Promises and sin. Min contemplated the moisture on Se7en's fingers then as the older man held his breath, Min closed his full lips over Se7en's offering, slowly drawing back while licking away the marinade.

"I want to learn how to do that to you, Dong-Wook." Changmin knew he'd hit a nerve in Se7en. The other's sharp intake and then he felt a press of hardness against the cleft of his rear, Se7en's fingernails scraping a light line across his upper thigh, a tear in his jeans leaving Min's tender skin open to the other's touch.



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“You have no idea how much I want you to.” Se7en murmured softly into Min’s ear. “And if either one of us had eaten, I would say screw dinner and let’s work on each other. But you’re starving and I’m dead tired.”

“You look tired.” Min agreed, finally seeing the bruised circles under Se7en’s eyes. “I keep you up too late at night. I shouldn’t call.”

“Baby, your voice is sometimes the only thing that helps me sleep.” Se7en admitted, letting Min go to hunt for a griddle to cook the bulgogi on. “The nights we don’t talk, I spend most of my time wondering how you’d feel on the bed next to me. How you’d smell on my sheets. Your calls make me relax.”

“So I put you to sleep?” Min teased, stepping clear of Se7en’s playful punch. Laughing, Min pushed the bulgogi at Se7en, ordering the older man to fry up the meat while he finished the salad. They spent a few minutes, working around one another in the kitchen while Se7en lay the griddle thick with the marinated meat.

“Here.” Min handed Se7en a packet of dry ramen. “You’re stronger. Break this up for me.”

“And this goes in the salad?” Dong-Wook gave Min a skeptical look. “Really?”

“Really.” Min nodded. “I’ve had it before. And Jaejoong made it. I guess I never realized the crunch in it was noodles, not just the almonds. It’s really good. You’ll like it. Even the dressing came out nice.”

“How big should I make the pieces?” Se7en crumbled the noodles while they were still in the package, Min laughing when the cellophane burst along the seams and the ramen spilled onto the counter. “Okay, let’s try that again.”

“Here.” Min handed him a sheet of cling wrap. “Put the noodles in this. It should hold.”

Dinner was eaten from a single large platter set between them, the men sitting with crossed legs on the red couch. A mixed CD of American R&B tunes played softly in the background, the sweet murmur of a woman’s voice wailing of falling in and out of love. The music was a low bass line to Se7en’s spicy burst of laughter as he dared Min to taste the salad first. Holding a pinch of the cabbage between chopsticks, Min held a bite out for Se7en, looking expectantly at the other man’s face when Se7en chewed carefully.

“It’s good.” The older man nodded in approval, holding his beer bottle up in salute for Min’s cooking efforts. “This is all good. You’re a good cook.”

“Bulgogi is easy.” Min replied. “Okay not so easy. I still think I added the green onions in too late. I’m sorry about your saucepan.”

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“I’d like to think it gave its life valiantly trying to make your rice.” Se7en reached over and grabbed a piece of peppered cucumber from a dish on the table, feeding the morsel to Min before taking one for himself. “Don’t worry about it. I wasn’t attached to it. I’m sure I never even touched it before tonight.”

“How horrible. It came into this house and the first time you touch it is when you’re giving it a burial down the trash chute like a dead goldfish.” Min made a face.

“If I’d gotten around to getting a rice cooker, then it wouldn’t have had to die.”

“If I knew how to cook rice in a pan, it would have survived to live another day.” Min replied.

Se7en nearly dropped a piece of meat he’d been trying to remove from their plate, snatching the tidbit with his fingers before it fell on Min’s bare foot. Grinning, he popped it into his mouth, giving Min a quizzical look when he caught the younger man watching him.

“What?” Se7en asked around a mouthful of food. “I caught it.”

“I love your hands.” Min blurted out suddenly, covering his face with his spread fingers. “I’m sorry. I don’t know why I said that.”

“My hands love you.” Se7en leaned over the food, stealing a kiss from his friend. “So does my mouth.”



Se7en’s prediction of him falling asleep on Min’s stomach was close to the truth. Min lay against the other man’s stomach, Se7en’s arm looped over his bare abdomen. They’d taken a long time eating, punctuated by periodic yawns from both Se7en and Min as the long day caught up with them. Giving Min a lingering kiss, Se7en suggested they go to bed, hoping for some sleep. Leaving the dishes until the morning, Se7en held Min’s hand while he led the younger man to the bedroom,

Changmin tried not to let his nervousness take him over, but standing in the bathroom while brushing his teeth and finding Se7en behind him, their closeness reflected back at him in the mirror, did nothing to ease his trembling nerves. Se7en merely kissed the rise of Min’s shoulder, padding back out into the bedroom to pull the covers back.

They’d spent nearly two hours talking, Min’s bare chest rubbed warm where Se7en touched him, the older man’s fingers making slow, widening circles over his belly and around his nipples. There was no pressure for more. Both were so satisfied with touching one another gently, exploring naked torsos and taking small kisses from willing mouths.

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Se7en fell asleep first, his words slowly become lengthy draws then finally a murmuring cuddle against Min's body, sliding his thigh between Changmin's legs and wrapping his arms about the other's waist. Nestling into the softness of Min's hair, Se7en knew he would drift off to sleep but fought the lethargy, unwilling to lose the comfort he found in the other man's presence.

A soft whisper from Min reassured Se7en that the younger man there in the morning. That and a kiss is what Se7en took with him to his dreams.

When Min's cell phone rang in the hours near dawn, he reached for it automatically, fumbling for the device and nearly losing it when he struck his hand on the unfamiliar nightstand. So used to answering the phone in the middle of the night, Changmin didn't think about what to say. His throat already released the words before his body realized that Se7en lay against him and not at the other end of the line.

"Hey, Iro." Changmin murmured. "Can't sleep, baby?"

The voice at the other end of the line stopped Min's heart and he sat up too quickly, nearly dizzy. Se7en turned, feeling the shift of weight on the bed and the older man blinked awake, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. Min's stomach clenched, only relaxing when Se7en's hand slipped over his hip, a questioning murmur in his voice after hearing feeling a scared tremble work through his lover's body.

"We came home and found you weren't here." Yunho's cold anger broke off the ends of his hard words. "Where the fuck are you, Changmin and who the hell is *lover*?"

# 15

Changmin knew this moment would come. Albeit it arrived sooner than he'd thought it would, but now as he felt the heat of Yunho's anger, the knot in his stomach unraveled, leaving him strangely calm. It was finally out in the open.

"Dongsaeng, did you hear me?" Yunho's voice was sharp. Min had not heard that edge in Yunho's voice since he'd called Jaejoong a whore a long time ago. The young singer was certain he could cut diamonds with the hardness in Yunho's tone. "Where are you?"

Change tactics, his mind whispered. Take what you've learned and use it to your advantage. Be the man that Se7en sees you as, not the frail, unsure young boy you need to leave behind.

Easier said than done, his gremlin snorted.

"Is everything alright, hyung?" Min swung his legs over the edge of the bed, rubbing at the bridge of his nose and trying to work the headache from between his eyes. "Why are you home? You're supposed to be in Okinawa."

"Is that why you're not here? Because we're supposed to be in Okinawa?" Yunho asked, waving off Jaejoong's shushing. "Where are you? Answer me, Changmin."

Se7en slid over to rub at Changmin's spine, propping himself up on one elbow and kissing at the edge of Min's ribs, placing another along the downy hair on the other man's lower back. "Is that Yunho?"

Min nodded rather than answering him, listening to Yunho's questions on the other end of the phone. He was more worried that something happened rather than Yunho's anger at finding him missing. Something changed inside of him. In that moment, Min took a breath in and breathed out as someone stronger than he'd given himself credit for.

"Come home now, Minnie-ah." Yunho said, his voice tight. "You're too young to be out like this. Tell whoever you're with that you're leaving. I'll come get you."

"Do you need me to take you home?" Se7en sat up all the way, resting his chin on Min's shoulder, murmuring into the younger man's ear. "I'll do that if you want me to. I don't want you to feel cornered by this. It's not fair to you, Minku."

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“No. Thank you, iro, but no.” Min kissed Se7en on the nose, shaking his head. Turning his attention back to the phone conversation. “Yunnie-ah, no. You won’t be coming to get me. I won’t be coming home. Answer me please. Is everything okay with you and Joongie-ah? Did something happen to make you come home?”

“Is that Choi Dong-Wook I hear?” Yunho narrowed his eyes, glancing at Jaejoong standing at the end of the couch. “Did you know he was seeing Choi?”

“Se7en?” Jaejoong whistled under his breath. “Damn. Really? I had my money on Hyukjae.”

“You knew about this? You knew he was seeing someone?” Yunho gaped, his temper spilling over the tight control he held over it so far. “What the hell is going on? He’s barely old enough to drive much less...”

“Fuck? Believe it or not, I was old enough for that a while ago. I’ve just never gotten around to doing it.” Min supplied the coarseness for Yunho, twisting the phrase until it dripped with filth and baseness. “Yunnie-ah, if you can’t talk to me and tell me what’s happened to bring you home, then please give the phone to Joongie-ah. I can’t believe I have to get a straight answer from Jaejoong.”

“Do you want some tea?” Se7en asked, searching for his drawstring pants. “Never mind. I’ll make you cocoa.”

“Hold on a minute, Yunho.” Min said into the phone, listening for a second as the leader’s anger ramped back up. “Yunho, please. I need you to stop.”

“Thank you. I think I need some tea, really.” Min nodded, holding the phone away from his ear. The gentle kiss Se7en left on his forehead brought a flush of tears into his eyes, the sting of Yunho’s anger finally sinking in. “Green or jasmine if you have it.”

“Anything for you, baby.” Se7en murmured. “I’ll go pick some if I don’t have any.”

“Shichi?” Min sniffed, leaning his head back and breathing in deeply. He would not cry, he told himself. Taking in harsh breaths, he blew the air up onto his eyes, using the puffs to forestall any tears.

“What do you need, baby?” Se7en tied his pants, tucking the loops into the waistband. Leaning on the bed with the flat of his hands, Se7en kissed at the corners of Min’s eyelids, tasting the salt of the young man’s pain on his tongue. “Don’t cry, Minku. Please. You’ll break me. I can’t stand to see you cry. Tell you what, if you don’t want to deal with this crap, stay here until you feel like you want to deal with him.”

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“Are you sure?” Min no longer heard the fire in Yunho’s words, just the intent to hem him into a corner where he no longer felt like he fit. “This is ugly. I don’t want you in the middle of this. You don’t deserve any of this.”

“Hell, if it means I get to come home and see you wearing my clothes, then I’m all for it.” Se7en grinned, biting a small nip into Min’s neck. “I’ll give you some privacy. And if you decide you want me to go over to your house and break Yunho’s nose, I can do that too.”

“Minnie-ah?” Jaejoong’s voice broke over the line, slightly distant in Min’s ear. “Let me talk to him, Yunnie.”

“No,” Yunho said firmly. “I’m coming to get you, Changmin.”

“No. No, you’re not.” Min replied. The butterflies in his stomach were sure to be wolves by the time he finished this phone call but if he didn’t speak up for himself now, he never would be able to do so in the future. “I’m going to ask you one more time, is everything alright?”

“Our flight was delayed until later this morning. We thought we’d come home and sleep a bit. That is before we found you were gone.” Yunho bit back. “And no, everything’s not alright! You’re sleeping with Choi.”

“Who I sleep with isn’t any of your business, hyung.” Wrapping the sheets around his naked torso, Min fell back onto the bed, throwing an arm over his eyes. “So long as you and the others are okay.”

“He’s going to hurt you, Min.” The older man warned. Yunho sat on the couch, tired of pacing off the living room. He’d failed their youngest, not giving him enough protection from the world around them. “Se7en’s not good enough for you. He’s not. He’s an asshole.”

“Yunnie-ah, you don’t know him.” The tears returned, burning across his eyelashes.

“I’m guessing you don’t know him either.” Yunho retorted. “Chances are you’re only seeing what he wants you to see.”

“Hyung, I love you. I do.” Min whispered, feeling his heart clench in his chest. He could hear Se7en moving around in the kitchen, the small rattle of pots and pans as he searched for a kettle. “But I need to be able to make my own mistakes. If Se7en hurts me, then I am the one making that decision. You can’t make it for me. You just can’t.”

“I promised your mother that I’d look out for you, Minnie-ah.” Yunho’s voice broke, his anger fighting a losing battle with worry. “I don’t like Choi. How do you know that he’s not doing this because he wanted Jaejoong? And you’re an easy way to get back at me and Joongie-ah?”

“So you don’t think that Se7en would be interested in me because of who I am?” A brittleness crept over Min’s words, a dangerous glint of steel

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emerging in his spirit. “Are you telling me that there’s nothing attractive in me other than a means for revenge because he couldn’t have Jaejoong?”

“It’s a possibility, Minnie-ah.” Yunho replied. “You don’t know him.”

“If that’s what you think he wants from me, then neither do you.” Changmin cut off Yunho’s protests. “Listen to me, Jung Yunho.”

“I can’t let you stay there, dongsaeng. I just can’t.”

“You don’t have a say in it, Yunho.” Min said, wishing in his guts that Se7en wasn’t in the kitchen making tea. He needed the other man beside him right now. Min wanted the other’s warmth against the coldness creeping into his body. “I keep saying that but you’re not listening.”

“Do you love him? Has it gone that far?”

“I don’t know.” Min whispered. “Yunnie-ah, I can’t talk to you about this. Please, put Jaejoong on the phone.”

“Don’t hang up until I’m done with you.” Yunho warned. “Hold on.”

“Minnie-ah,” Jaejoong took the phone from his lover, sitting down on the edge of the couch as Yunho stood, the leader’s long strides making short work of the living room floor. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” Changmin sighed at the worry in Jae’s voice. “Please, I’m okay. Really.”

“Yunho, stop it.” Jaejoong pointed towards the kitchen. Yunho’s pacing was making him nervous, his lover’s body a frenetic blur of motion. “Go make us coffee or tea. Just stop walking around me.”

“He’s really mad.” Min said. “I knew he was going to be but I guess I didn’t think it would be like this.”

“Yunnie-ah doesn’t like Se7en.” The older man admitted. “And the last thing he would want for you is to be hurt by Choi Dong-Wook. He’d feel like he failed you.”

“He didn’t fail me.” The blankets smelled of star anise and coffee, two fragrances he’d come to associate with Se7en. “Dong-Wook and I are... exploring things. But I really need you to understand that I’m not doing this because I just want to see what sex is like.”

“I worry that you’re experimenting with men because of us...because of me.” Jaejoong whispered, the echo of his father’s accusing words of perversion coming back to haunt the older man. “We’ve talked about before.”

“Jaejoong, being around you has only taught me that love really doesn’t confine itself to what we want or what we’re looking for. I wasn’t looking for

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this thing with Se7en.” Min admitted. “I wasn’t but we started talking and Jaejoong, he listens to me.”

“We listen to you. Minnie-ah.”

“No, you sort of pay attention to some of the things I say but it’s different. He listens and asks questions.” Chewing on one of his knuckles, the young man thought about what he wanted to stay. “We talk sometimes for hours about nothing. Just the things that we see in our day or sometimes we laugh about how funny our lives are.”

“He makes me feel...special, Joongie-ah. I’ve not felt special for a very long time. And never like this.”

“You can’t make me feel like this,” Min whispered. “And even if he breaks my heart, it’s going to be my heart, not any one else’s.”

“Yunnie-ah asked you if you loved him. Do you?”

“I love him.” Changmin swallowed at the lump in his throat. “I don’t know if I’m in love with him. That’s so much to ask from him and I don’t think he wants to be in love. But he’s someone that I feel like I can just sit on the couch with and read while he does something else. And we don’t have to do anything but talk or lean against each other.”

“He asks me what I see when I watch people, Joongie-ah.” Min rolled over onto his side, taking the Se7en scented sheets with him. “No one’s ever cared about what I see. No one. It’s...nice.”

“Is he nice enough to be worth the pain?” Jaejoong asked, breathless with worry. “Tell me, please, that he is. Because Yunho thinks he’s going to break your heart and throw you away. I don’t want that for you. Not you, Minnie-ah.”

“If he throws me away,” Changmin bit his lip to prevent himself from openly sobbing. “Then I hope I break his heart as much as he can break mine. But I’m not letting him go, Joongie-ah. We’ve come too far for me to just walk away. And I won’t do that to him. He needs me as much as I need him. I feel that, Jaejoong. I really do.”

“You sound like you’re in love, Min.” Jaejoong saw the shock on Yunho’s face, his lover glancing up from the kitchen area. Grimacing at Yunho’s stricken look, Jaejoong turned away, hoping he was wrong about Min’s feelings towards the other man. Se7en’s reputation for seduction and dismissal was rumour at best but there had to be truth there, a sliver of something that endangered their tender-hearted Changmin.

“If I am, would that be so wrong?” The younger man asked. “And if I’m not, wouldn’t that also be wrong?”



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“I need to feel like I’m alive, Joongie-ah.” Min continued. “I’m living my life behind a glass wall. I can see everything but I can’t touch anything. Every day I spend hours watching people and imagining what their lives are like. I live through these people that I don’t even know. I go with them to work or school. I fight with their husbands or wives and hell, I even spend hours wondering what it would be like to make those soft murmuring sounds I hear from Junsu’s mouth when they haven’t closed the door all the way.”

“I can’t spend my life that way, Jaejoong. I’m not living. I’m just waiting to die while moving around when other people tell me to move or dancing when other people tell me to dance. I’ve got to have some control over who I am. And Se7en gives me that.”

“I’m going to have some tea.” Changmin said, catching his breath. “Tell Yunho I’ll talk to him tomorrow. Well, later today. Don’t miss your flight to Okinawa.”

“He won’t leave until he knows that you’re home safe, Min.” Jaejoong replied. “Right now, I don’t think he wants to go at all. Yunnie-ah is just worried for you.”

“Tell him I’m fine.” Min smiled when he spotted Se7en in the doorway. “I’m going to have some tea and talk with Dong-Wook. I have to see if he still wants me now that Yunho knows about him. I wouldn’t blame Se7en if he walks away and never looks back.”

“Never.” Se7en carried a tray of steaming mugs into the bedroom, setting it down on the night stand. “If Yunho breaks my face, you’ll kiss it better, no?”

“Yes.” Min laughed. “Still silly.”

“Always.” The other man headed into the bathroom, closing the door behind him.

“Please, Jaejoong. Don’t put off your vacation for this.” Changmin pleaded. “And please don’t let Yunnie-ah worry about this. I’m alright. Se7en will take care of me.”

“I would tell him, Minnie-ah.” Jaejoong looked about the room worriedly. Yunho’s car keys were missing, gone from the table he’d tossed them on. “But I think he’s gone.”

“Gone?” The mattress creaked under Min as he sat up. “Gone where?”

“I’m guessing he’s gone to get you.” Jaejoong sighed heavily. “He just needs to call someone who’ll give him Se7en’s address and there are several people who’ll do that.”

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“Fuck.” Min swore. Junsu had the right idea. The expletive felt good to release. “I don’t need this. Se7en doesn’t need this. He’s acting like his father.”

“Be sure to tell him that when he gets there, Minnie-ah.” The singer snorted. “I’m sure that will win him right over.”

“What do I do, Joongie?” Changmin glanced worriedly at the closed bathroom door, wondering how long he could hold off Yunho before the older man got tired of pounding on a locked up apartment.

“Don’t let Yunho bully you, Min-min.” Jaejoong sent a quick prayer for their youngest’s safety. Se7en would be able to take care of himself. That one always landed on his feet, Jae thought to himself. “If Se7en means anything to you, fight for it. That’s all I can say to you. I love Yunho but sometimes he has to be reminded he can’t arrange our lives for us.”

“Thank you, hyung.” Min heard the door open, mentally preparing to tell Se7en of Yunho’s impending arrival. “Saranghae.”

“I love you too.” Jae whispered. “Take care of yourself. And if you want me to come over, I will.”

“No, the last thing I want to have is you, me and Se7en all in one room while Yunho’s raging.” Dong-Wook shook his head as he slid onto the bed next to Changmin. “Se7en thinks that’s a bad idea too.”

“Well good luck.” The singer said. “And damn, I don’t think Chunnie-ah guessed it was Se7en. We were guessing who you were talking to. Yunho thought it might be someone in Suju. Shiwon, I think. Actually it would have been better if it was Shiwon.”

“At least it’s not Rain.” Min said, a tint of bitterness in his voice.

“Rain’s never touching you again, Minnie-ah.” Jaejoong reassured him.

“You know then. Of course you do. I don’t know why I keep thinking that you’re as dumb as people say you are.” Changmin bowed his head, stiffening when Se7en’s hand touched his shoulder. “This night is just getting better.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Jaejoong said. “If anyone understands, it’s me, dongsaeng.”

“That’s true.” Min smiled ruefully. “You do.”

“Now, warn Se7en. Maybe he can find a quick flight out of Japan.”

“Never.” Changmin retorted. “Se7en isn’t one to hide.”

“Better ask Se7en that before you make any promises.” Dong-Wook interjected. “I might be willing to hide.”

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“From Yunho.” Min said to his lover. “Jaejoong thinks he’s coming here.”

“Ah,” Se7en thought for a second then nodded. “Tell Joongie-ah goodnight for me. I’m going to go make some more tea. And I’ll guess we’ll need another cup. With any luck, he’ll drink from it instead of throwing it at me.”

# 16

Dong-Wook laid a gentle kiss on his young lover's sleeping mouth, running the back of his hand on Min's peaceful face. Driven to exhaustion by stress, Changmin nodded off after a few sips of tea, lulled by Se7en's murmuring words. He asked Se7en to wake him when Yunho got there.

Se7en made no promises as he tucked the bedding they'd shared around Min's body. Once the bedroom door was closed, Min wouldn't hear anything coming from the front rooms. He'd be damned if Yunho would add more shadows to the dark circles under Changmin's eyes.

He was washing the last of the dinner dishes when the intercom buzzed. Se7en told the guards downstairs to let Yunho up and he wiped off the counter with a damp sponge. Pouring water into the tea kettle, he left it on the cold stove in case in the remote possibility that the other man would be reasonable and just want to talk.

Face it, Se7en; he laughed to himself. Yunho is never reasonable where one of his boys is concerned.

He had to admit, Yunho was a fairly awe-inspiring sight when angry. Se7en opened the door and stood aside for the leader of TVXQ to come in. A slight brush of their shoulders as Yunho went by him told Se7en a lot. There wouldn't be any easy forgiveness for keeping the truth from Jung, nor would the other man allow Min to stay in the apartment unless Se7en was able to make him see reason.

Once again, he reminded himself, Yunho was not reasonable.

"Where is he?" Standing in the middle of the living area, Yunho was a pillar of anger and sleekness. Any warmth had bled from his dark eyes, his mouth set into a thin line.

"He's asleep." Se7en returned to the kitchen area, holding up a thick mug for Yunho to see. "Do you want some tea?"

"What? Did you drug him?" The accusation came at Se7en sideways, a cutting remark meant to hurt.

It would have if he'd not been prepared for it. Se7en knew Yunho came to give no quarter in this argument. It was going to be possibly the ugliest thing he'd ever been embroiled in. Funny, he whispered to himself, there wasn't one moment in this when he thought that Changmin wasn't worth it.

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“I would tell you to fuck off, Jung.” He measured out a spoonful of fragrant leaves into a tea ball, setting it at the bottom of a mug before turning the kettle on. “But the truth is, that won’t help anything. Min fell asleep nearly as soon as he got off the phone with Jaejoong. He’s tired.”

Yunho took a step towards him, fists clenched tight and shoved down into his jeans. Se7en nearly flinched, steadying himself with the comfort of the wide granite and wood bar between them. No, he definitely wasn’t prepared to deal with an infuriated Yunho. He wasn’t sure anyone would be.

“Why is he tired?” Yunho’s anger peppered his words. “How long did you keep him up? Or how long did you keep yourself up?”

Now Se7en understood what Yunho was angry about, unsure if he should sigh with relief at being able to say he hadn’t touched Min that way or pissed since it wasn’t any of Yunho’s business. With a calming breath, he opted for the first. If it went poorly, there was always the second route. Staring at the other man’s handsome face, Se7en sighed in resignation. By all accounts, this didn’t look like it was going to go well no matter what route he took.

“If you’re saying that I kept him up making love, you’re wrong.” Se7en replied. Puttering around in the kitchen was strangely calming. He would have to do it more often.

“Making love.” Sarcasm spat Yunho’s words at Se7en’s face. “You’re fucking him. You don’t love him. You’re just using him to get back at me or Jaejoong. Or maybe just to get off on hurting him. Don’t call it making love.”

Se7en had been sure he wouldn’t be the one to throw the first punch. If anyone had asked him, he would have said that he was better than that. But he wasn’t surprised when he found himself on the other side of the counter, nearly ready to punch Yunho across the face. It would have been a satisfying feeling if Yunho hadn’t been ready for him.

Nothing hurt more than a well-placed fist across his cheek.

It hurt. Se7en had to admit that. But all in all, it was something that he could handle. He wasn’t sure if he could take another one but the first wasn’t so bad. That is until the pain spread over the rest of his face and he nearly bit down on the inside of his cheek to prevent himself from crying out.

“Come on,” Yunho stood taut, the bob of his head a clear challenge. “I’ve been wanting to do this for a fuck of a long time.”

The cockiness of Yunho’s stance and the tilt of his head meant trouble. Se7en knew it. He wasn’t stupid. Touching at the tender welt growing under his eye, he winced, thinking of the trouble he’d get from his make up artist come morning.

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“No.” His answer surprised him. He was more than ready to do this, even if it meant having to clean up his own blood from the floor. Thankfully he didn’t have carpet. He’d have to have someone come in and steam otherwise. “I’m not going to fight with you, Jung. I was stupid for letting you bait me. I’m not going to give you that.”

“I’m going to have some tea,” Se7en returned to the kitchen, wondering if he would look too much of a weakling by putting ice on his throbbing face. Touching at the soreness while his back was to Yunho, he thanked God that Yunho hit him with a ringless hand. He didn’t want to explain away a cut as well as a black eye. “Do you want some?”

“I want to take Min home.” The leader looked around, spotting several doors off of the main room. “I’m just going to start looking.”

After pouring hot water over the tea ball, Se7en set aside the kettle and strode back into the living area, bringing himself just out of Yunho’s reach. He wasn’t going to be stupid. He’d want at least a little bit of warning before he got punched again.

“He doesn’t want to go, Yunho.” He readied himself, in case Yunho decided to hit him again. It looked to be a sure thing. Se7en was surprised Yunho held his anger in control. Maybe one punch was all the other man needed.

Seeing the hard glint in Yunho’s eyes, Se7en quickly revised that assumption. The other was spoiling for a fight. The only reason he wasn’t pounding the crap out of Se7en was because he was there for Min. And the thought of that softened Se7en’s heart.

“Yunho,” He said. “Wait.”

“No. I want him home and safe.” Yunho replied. “He’s not safe here.”

“No, he’s not.” Se7en admitted. He nearly stepped back when Yunho moved forward but Se7en held his ground. If he was going to get punched unconscious, he would at least have his say. “I’m not going to hurt him. I care about Changmin.”

“You only care about yourself, Se7en. The only thing that you’re concerned about is making sure you feel good. You don’t think about how you affect other people.”

“That’s unfair.” Se7en protested, moving carefully around Yunho. He would at least attempt to be between the leader and the door. He could give Min that much. “I’m not like that?”

“No?” Yunho cocked his head, dangerous and sleek in his fury. “How about when Jaejoong stepped away from you because your hands were on him? And all you did was move back in? You made him uncomfortable but

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you didn't care because nothing mattered to you but getting your hands on him."

"What do you mean uncomfortable?" Se7en look perplexed. "He didn't say anything to me. He was laughing."

"Joongie-ah was laughing because he was nervous." Yunho explained. "He moved away because you were affecting him. And I'm not angry about that. I'm not. Jae's pretty and he's human. He's going to be aroused when someone's rubbing up against him. But he moved off because it was wrong. And you followed. He spent the day feeling like he was dirty and was embarrassed about it."

"I didn't know." Se7en protested. "He should have said something. I thought it was just fun!"

"Yeah, fun." Yunho quirked his mouth. "What you might think is fun could be something that bothers someone else. Joongie needed some space. He gave himself some and you wouldn't let him have it. I call that selfish. And you expect me to believe that you're going to be any better than that to our Changmin?"

"If I'd known about Jaejoong, I would have stopped." He replied. "I wouldn't have..."

"Touched him?" With a cock of his head, Yunho regarded the other man. "You shouldn't have touched him anyway. He wasn't yours. You knew that. Don't tell me you didn't. That disregard for people around you is what I don't want Min to be a part of. You're going to bleed him dry and then toss him out. He should get more than that from his first lover."

Se7en's anger snapped open, a razor cutting up from his patience. He'd listened to enough of Yunho's accusations and was ready to retaliate. Damn the man's quicker fists. He'd give out as much as Yunho could take. Furniture could always be replaced.

"Are you sure you're not feeling this way because you see Jaejoong in Changmin?" Se7en stepped forward, not caring if his mouth got him in trouble. "They're a lot alike. Shy, sometimes serious. Sometimes goofy. And naïve. Maybe you see Min and think, that's the one I should have so you're not going to share?"

"Min and Joongie are alike." Yunho nodded. "But Changmin is unbroken. And they're none of your business."

"No?" He pressed. "I think that you're holding onto Changmin because he's someone you want too. But can't have. Because there's poor brittle Jaejoong that you're holding together. Is that what this is, Yunho? You're wanting Min but you're stuck with Jae because you've already fucked him

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and he won't let go? Maybe you're the one they should be afraid of. Not me."

As soon as the words left Se7en's mouth, he knew they were a mistake. They were even more of a mistake when Yunho's fist pushed those same words back in, knocking him back on his ass. The floor was hard, Se7en realized. So was the edge of the entertainment centre.

Half-lying on the floor, the ache in his face felt nothing compared to the pain in his soul at what he'd just said about Changmin. Guilt crept into his thoughts, and he sent a silent apology to the young man sleeping on his bed. Yunho was right about one thing. Changmin deserved so much better than this.

"Get up, bitch." Yunho stood over him, the knuckles on his right hand reddened.

"What? So you can hit me again?" Se7en reached up for the edge of a cabinet, hauling himself up to his feet. "Give me a minute. And yeah, you can hit me again. I deserve it for what I just said."

"I'm not leaving him here with you." Yunho repeated. "Min's done nothing in his life to deserve your shit. Hell, no one's done anything bad enough to deserve you."

"It's not bad between me and Min, Yunho." Se7en shook his head, hoping to clear the stars from his vision. They swam around a bit, bobbing back and forth but never really cleared. "I'd tell you that you had to believe me but somehow I don't think you're going to."

"You're right. I don't."

"Changmin's been in my life for months now." Se7en rubbed at his side. It felt like he'd cracked a rib. Or at least bruised the hell out of his side. "He's been my friend and we've just started to be lovers. I'm not going to let you take him from me or walk away from him. It's not going to be like that, Yunho."

"Give me one reason why I shouldn't just kick your ass and just take him?" Yunho asked, a dark sheaf of hair falling over his eyes. "One good fucking reason."

"Because Min's important to me." Se7en leaned his head back, rubbing at his face with open palms. The friction on his tender skin hurt but the wave of pain offered a shimmer of clarity. "He's my friend."

It wasn't just about the promise of delicious sex, of showing the delectable young man how to feel every nerve in his body. Those things were nice and they both enjoyed the lengthy kisses and slow exploration of each other's bodies. Nothing had moved beyond that night in the limo and neither felt pressured by the other. It was nice to just be with someone and



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enjoy them. Se7en just discovered the joy in that. He had Changmin to thank for that realization.

Se7en knew he would hurt if he didn't hear Changmin tell him about the people he saw during the day and the stories he made up about where they were off to. He would miss Min listening to him about the rigors of trying to work out new dance moves, and the difficulties of trying to maintain a business built up around his image and talents. Changmin understood those things and commiserated.

Hell, Min even gave him advice on how to minimize the stress he felt during the roughest times of his life when the world just seemed to be fighting against him.

He couldn't sleep some nights until he heard Min's voice asking him if he knew what time it was. It had become routine, hearing the whisper of dulcet sugar on the line before he drifted off. Then there were the nights when he was too hard to even imagine sleeping, satiated only with the husky murmurs of Changmin's suggestions. The boy had a dirty mind and the mouth of an angel. Se7en could hear him blushing even over the phone.

More than anything, he wanted to lick the blush as it chased across Min's body. He now regretted endangering that because of his anger. He wanted Min. Needed Min. Yunho couldn't win in this. It wasn't a fight against the leader. It was a fight to keep Changmin in his life.

"You think of him as a friend?" Yunho scoffed, nearly spitting in Se7en's face. "I love Changmin as a friend. As my brother. I gave promises that I would look after him. I promised Jaejoong that he wouldn't have to worry about someone hurting Min. I promised Shim-mom that I would look after her son. There's nothing you can say that is going to stop me from taking him out of that door. Nothing, Se7en!"

"No, I'm going to have to stop you, Jung." Se7en stood his ground, placing himself firmly between Yunho and the bedroom door. "I don't care if you beat me until I'm dead. Min wants to be here. He wants a lot of things in his life. And I love him enough to want those things for him too."

"Love." Yunho looked away, a cocky knowing grin on his face. "You're not talking about love. You're not thinking of anything other than getting your dick wet and then you'll be off to someone else."

"No," The other man shook his head, exhaling between his pressed full lips. "I'm going to be Changmin's lover for as long as he'll let me. I think I'm in love with him, Yunho. And I don't want to let him go."

"Yunnie-ah," Changmin's quiet voice whispered between the two angry men, disturbing the air with a gentle ripple. Turning, Se7en saw the bleached paleness of his lover's face, shock leeching all of the blood from Min's skin.

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“Jaejoong must be very worried. I think it’s time for you to go home.” Min’s eyes were enormous in his face, his mouth slightly open as he tried to remember to breathe. “Se7en and I need to talk, Yunnie-ah. Alone, please.”

# 17

Se7en sat with an ice pack on his face, trying not to listen to the heated conversation of whispers Min was having with the leader of his group. Yunho was reluctant to leave the youngest behind, insisting he would wait downstairs in the car. Changmin was having none of that, telling Yunho it would be best if he left so they could talk.

Talk.

Se7en learned to hate that word in only one minute. He knew he was going to loathe it in a few more.

He didn't know what possessed him to blurt out those words. And now, seeing Min's ashen face, he regretted saying them more than he did accusing Yunho of wanting Changmin.

Yes, things were definitely going to go downhill.

"Hey." Min joined Se7en on the couch, sitting on the arm and peering at the swelling on the older man's face. Yunho's fist glanced off of Se7en's mouth, breaking the skin on his lower lip.

"He's gone then?" Se7en asked, looking up from the couch.

Changmin ached. Seeing Dong-Wook sprawled in a boneless, sensual heap against pillows made him want the older man even more than he already had. The words he heard when he'd come out of the bedroom made him realize he should run away as far as he could.

"Yes. I told him to go home." Changmin winced at the red swell under Se7en's eye when the singer shifted the ice pack to his mouth. "I hope he left. I don't want to find him downstairs."

Se7en pulled the pack from his face, setting it down on the glass coffee table. A few rivulets of water formed around the moist fabric beginning a steady drip onto the wood floor. Min's response told him many things. None of which he liked.

"So you're leaving too?" His face no longer hurt as much as his gut, the air turning stale in his lungs. Se7en couldn't put his mind around the ache along his jaw line and throat, untouched by Yunho's fists but nearly as sore as the searing burn in his chest. Emotional pain was as bone-breaking as a well-placed fist.

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"I don't know what to do." Changmin moved away from Se7en's touch as the man reached out to skim his fingers along Min's knee.

That small movement of Min's hurt as well. Another bruise forming on Se7en's heart.

"I'm..." Se7en stopped speaking, trying to find the words in his throat around the lump forming there. "What did you hear?"

"Right before he punched you." Min said. "About me and Jaejoong. And everything after that."

"The first or second time?" He still couldn't breathe, the stretch of muscle along his ribs giving Se7en a twinge as he tried to catch air.

"He punched you twice?" Min frowned, his lower lip a kissable pout to Se7en's eyes. "I'm sorry for that."

"Talk to me, Minku." Se7en had never begged. It was beneath him and not worth the drama. It was always better to leave a lover with a nice present, a kiss and fond memories. Begging for someone's attention and heart were foreign things to him. He'd come quickly to the conclusion that he didn't like it. Even for Changmin.

"If you want me to apologize for what I said about you and Jaejoong, I will. Because I am sorry I said that. I didn't think about how it would hurt you. I only wanted to fling something into Yunho's face. And, well, that's what came out."

"No, I understand." Min nearly laughed at the irony of being on the other side of foul words. Hadn't he nearly soured his relationship with Jaejoong for doing that exact same thing. "I've said some things that I've wanted to take back as soon as my tongue finished with them. I'm surprised that Jae hasn't bashed my face in like Yunho tried with you."

"There was no try, baby." Se7en gingerly touched his face. "Yunho did bash my face in. Is it bad? Can makeup cover it?"

"Don't make me look too closely." Changmin tilted his head back, wondering why there were tears in his eyes. There was too much going on in his head, his thoughts racing about and drowning any common sense he might have left. "I need to..."

"You need to walk out of this, ne?" Se7en finished for him, a flat line of disappointment in his voice. "This. Like this isn't me and you. Just something you found on the bottom of your shoe?"

"Don't say it like that." Min pleaded, dropping his gaze to Se7en's bruised face.

Purple splotches ran dark over the other man's cheek, raised welts where Yunho's knuckles rubbed the skin raw. As the swelling increased, it

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looked as if the area under Se7en's eye would split and tear under the pressure from below. A small cut ran a red slit down the man's lip and Min wanted to lean forward to kiss it away.

Fear kept him back. Fear and uncertainty. There was too much thrown into his face over the last half hour and now, Min just needed to get out and breathe.

"How else am I supposed to say it, Minku?" Se7en winced as his tongue touched the sore on his mouth, setting it to bleed again. "I'm just to sit here and let you walk away from us? You're supposed to be stronger than that. Isn't that the point?"

"There wasn't supposed to be an us, remember?" Min pressed. "Don't you remember? Friends. No ties other than that. I don't know how to love someone, Dong-Wook. Now you're changing the rules on me and telling Yunho that you're falling in love with me? You didn't even tell me that first. You didn't give me time to think and to adjust or even to say; no, Se7en, I don't want that."

"Do you want that?" The older man inched forward, grabbing at Min's leg before he could move it away. Se7en's strong hands kept Min in place, unable to move unless he toppled backwards onto the floor. "I didn't mean to tell Yunho anything. I just wanted to tell him that he needed to give you a chance to grow on your own. Everything else just blew up from there."

"I wasn't a part of that. You snuck away and let me sleep. You should have woken me up. I should have been here, dealing with " Min gestured with frantic hands. "I was supposed to be able to make my own decisions."

"Things happen outside of our control, Changmin." Se7en said, stopping when Min shook his head.

"No, everything happens outside of my control." The younger man replied. "God, you've become my best friend. Now I have to be the selfish one and say, I'm not ready for this. Don't fall in love with me because I'm thinking I can't be in love. I told you that. I told you I loved you. Why couldn't that be enough for now?"

Se7en had no answer. He'd not planned for any of this. That didn't seem to matter. Hissing in disgust, he released Min's leg and headed for the pantry, digging out a bottle of whiskey and a glass. Debating ice, he decided that would take too long, pouring himself a finger-breadth of amber and tossed it back, feeling the bite of the liquor at the back of his throat.

Standing in the kitchen, Se7en stared at the young man watching him intently. He could see the pain in Min's face. But he was unsure if he was really responsible for putting it there.

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“What do you want me to do?” Another pour led to a sip this time. Se7en knew he’d want his wits about him if he was going to argue with Min. The young man was much too smart and would lead him around in circles if he was allowed to. “You want me to say I don’t love you?”

“No.” Min couldn’t hold Se7en’s gaze any longer, looking away to find the sun rising over the city. “I just need to... think.”

“You need to think?” Se7en chewed on his lip, swearing when he opened up the cut again. “Fuck. How long is the thinking going to last? A week? A month? I’m supposed to sit here and wait for you to decide if I’m okay to love? How much am I allowed to care for you? Enough for a midnight call? A blow job? What?”

“Don’t be like this.” Min wiped at his eyes, not surprised when he pulled his hand back and found it wet with tears.

“How else am I supposed to be, Minku?” Se7en asked. “We’ve been doing this, whatever this is, for months. I didn’t mind being hidden behind a closed door like I was someone to be ashamed of. Hell, I even loved knowing that I was a part of your life that you never shared. And now that there’s some sort of bump in the road, you’re just going to walk out the door because it’s what? Easier than dealing with the crap that goes along with life?”

“Yeah, I told Yunho I was falling for you.” The older man pursed his mouth, shrugging nonchalantly as he walked around the kitchen counter, cradling the glass of whiskey in his hand. “And I’m not going to regret it. I was going to ride it as far as it took me because I’ve never felt like that about someone. Never.”

“I’ve never wanted to fall in love. It’s a fucking mess and it doesn’t do anything but ruin lives.” Se7en stopped in front of Min, forcing the young man to raise his chin and look at the older man. “You think I want the kind of shit that Yunho and Jaejoong have to deal with? Do you think I want the damned fucking complications of having to duck around and hide who I want?”

“I’m not like you. I’ve already bled for a company to get my fame. I’ve reached a point where I can do what I want and I don’t have to be packaged to be sold.”

“I don’t want that either.” Min said softly. “I don’t think I can have any more complications.”

“So...” Se7en cocked his head, staring down at Min’s wet face. “What do you want to do? I can’t change how I feel. And you don’t want it. Now what?”

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“Now, I think I go home.” Changmin stood, his mouth nearly brushing against Se7en’s as he moved. The air between them quivered, poignant and heavy with want. “I’m sorry, Dong-Wook. I am.”

“Yeah, me too.” Se7en stepped back, turning away from the younger man and drained the glass.

“I’ll have someone drop off your jacket.” Changmin bent to pick up his backpack, its weight nearly dragging him down. He felt so tired and worn out; his heart leaden in his chest.

“No, don’t bother.” The singer shook his head, unwilling to look at Min. “Keep it. You’ll need something to keep that heart of yours warm if you don’t want anyone to do it for you.”

The door clicked closed a few seconds later, the apartment eerily empty. Se7en had grown too used to Min’s light presence in the matter of hours and now, to him, the vastness of the penthouse echoed around him. He needed to fill it with something, anything.

“Fuck you.” Se7en muttered, frustration growing in his belly. Anger burst from his pain and he clenched the glass, shattering it between his fingers, driving the shards into his hand. Blood spurted from the cuts, and a raw scream broke from his throat, a guttural primal rage reverberating around him.

He crouched, trying to do anything to ease the ache in his belly, the clenching in his guts too hard for him to take. Shaking the blood from his hand, Se7en cast a longing look at the half-bottle of whiskey sitting on the counter, a promise of numbness offered in the potent liquid.

Staggering to his feet, he reached for the bottle, untwisting the cap and taking a long swig, letting the burn roll down his tortured throat. Laughing suddenly, he leaned on the counter, resting his weight on his elbows as he looked at the ruin of his life.

Peeling at the label with his fingers, sucking at a large cut along the edge of his palm. Spitting out a mouthful of blood into the sink, he watched it mingle with the drops of water left over from his dishwashing. Swallowing another mouthful, he waited for the whiskey to take away how he felt, wishing the liquor would hurry up and erase everything that happened in the last half hour.

He murmured. “I was the one who told him not to fall in love with me. ‘Cause I don’t do love.”

Looking up at the ceiling, Se7en toasted the heavens with the bottle, snorting in disgust. “And they always told me God didn’t have a sense of humour. How fucking funny is this.”



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“You weren’t supposed to wait.” Changmin leaned into the open window of Yunho’s car, slanting his head to stare at the other man.

“Get in.” Yunho leaned over, unlocking the door. “I’ll take you home.”

“No, I don’t think I can go home just yet.” Min shook his head, slinging his laptop bag onto the seat next to Yunho. “Can you take that in for me? I think I need to walk or something.”

“It’s too early in the morning to walk around safely.” Yunho looked up at his youngest member’s face. “Did that bastard make you cry?”

“I think we made each other cry.” Changmin admitted. “Please, Yunnie-ah. I’ll be okay. I just need to be alone. You and Jaejoong need to catch your flight, don’t you?”

“You think either one of us are going to leave you when you’re like this?”

“Go to Okinawa, Yunnie-ah.” Min sighed, slinging his backpack over his shoulder. “I’ll call you when I get in if you’re not there. Or call me before you get on the plane. I’ll answer.”

He watched the car drive off, listening to the rubber of the tires squeaking through the remains of the rain along the asphalt. Looking around, Changmin took in the city as if seeing the streets for the first time. People were beginning to move about, pouring from apartments and cramped houses to reach train stations and begin their daily lives.

Outside of the flow, he wandered, stopping only when he felt the buzz of his phone along his side. Glancing at the number, he was half-disappointed to find it was Jaejoong. Answering, Min tried to lift his voice to assuage the older man’s worry but to no avail, Jae sniffed out his sorrow and told him that he and Yunho were staying in Japan, another drop of stress added to Min’s already overtaxed mind. Murmuring his thanks, unwilling to be selfish and ask the older men to leave the apartment so he could go home and cry alone, Changmin hung up and began to walk, not caring where he ended up.

Min found himself at a tea shop, the shades just beginning to be drawn up for the day. Bowing a greeting, he found a table away from the busy door, settling into an overstuffed chair and ordering a bracing cup of chai and a morning porridge with red beans. He stared at the people passing by, searching for the will to create stories about their lives but the pastime now reminded him of Se7en, too painful to be played so soon after the ache of their parting words.

The tea was flavourless in his mouth and the soupy rice stuck to his throat, a pasty mess he struggled to swallow. Sipping more chai to wash down the porridge, Min hiccupped, feeling his emotions spill over. He



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wanted to cry but his pride prevented it. He wouldn't want to be seen as weak, even in front of strangers.

Staring down at his cooling tea, Changmin wondered why it should matter what strangers felt about him. Shouldn't he embrace how he felt? Isn't that what Se7en was telling him all along?

And he wasn't supposed to be the one crying. Shouldn't he be the one who was going to be okay? He'd taken control. He'd decided for himself how it was going to be between them. He was the one who walked away.

Then why couldn't he stop the tears?

Biting down on the inside of his lip, Min dug around his backpack. Finding his cell, he dialed, waiting for the other end of the line to pick up. He'd about nearly given up when an unsteady voice answered on the other end, wishing him a good morning despite the early hour.

"Hi." Min stumbled over his breath, bowing his head as the tears fell from his swollen eyes. They sank into his lap, soaking into dark wide circles on the denim of his jeans. "I'm sorry... but I didn't know who else to call. I thought... I just needed..."

Min sighed, hearing reassurance across the phone line, his heart breaking under the anguish he'd stored there.

"I just don't know what to do." Changmin whispered, drawing his legs up under him. "I just... need to talk to someone and you... no, I'm not okay. Thanks. I mean, thank you for listening. Because I hurt and I just don't know what I can do. So thank you, if I forget to tell you that. Thank you for being here."

# 18

The trill of his phone woke Jaejoong, startling him from a deep, useless sleep. With the curtains drawn tight against the sun, he couldn't tell what time it was. Nor did he care. Jae answered the phone, trying to clear his voice then repeated his greeting, worried that he might have missed one of the member's calls.

"Hello?" Jae repeated, clearer as he woke.

"Hey."

The singer sat up, shocked at finding Se7en at the other end of his phone. Glancing quickly down at Yunho sleeping sprawled across the left side of the bed, Jaejoong cupped his hand over the phone, keeping his voice down.

"What do you want? Haven't you done enough tonight?" Jae blearily blinked at the clock. He'd not had enough sleep to counteract the stress of the day, first the delayed flight and then Changmin's troubles. "What time is it?"

"What is with you Dong Bang boys? So concerned about the time." Se7en slurred the end of his words. "I don't know what time it is. I don't care. I already told them I couldn't make it today."

"I'm hanging up now."

"No, no..." Se7en murmured. "I wanted to make sure Minnie-ah got home safe."

"He's probably asleep. If he came home." Jaejoong sighed, still trying to rub the sleep from his face and then wondered why he was even bothering. He planned on crawling back on top of Yunho once he hung up.

"I tried calling him. He's not picking up." The other man definitely sounded drunk. Possibly even insane to Jae's ears. "Go check on him for me. See if he's in his room."

"Hyung, you need to go to sleep. Or maybe take a shower."

"I've been calling him for hours." Se7en bit back a curse word. "I fucking hate this, Joongie-baby. I hate that I'm feeling like this. I want my head back to where it was. I don't need this kind of shit and here I am, calling after him like some lovesick fangirl that hangs on his every goddamned word."

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“Sleep, hyung.” Jae insisted. “I’ll have him call you later.”

“I’m going to keep calling you until you check on him. And if you don’t answer, I’ll head over there and start pounding on the door.” Jaejoong heard Se7en hiss as if in pain. “And right now, the way I feel, I’m going to puke on the door too.”

“Fine.” Jae slipped from the bed, shivering as his feet touched the cold floor. Digging around for his slippers, he debated asking Yunho to check on their youngest but after finally getting his lover down from the glowering rage he’d worked into, Jaejoong didn’t want to deal with any more trauma. “Hold on.”

Leaving the phone behind, Jae snuck down the hall, peeking into Changmin’s room and finding the young man’s bed pristine and made. A search of the house also held no sign of Min and Jae sighed, knowing he would have to head back and deal with Se7en. Coming back into the bedroom. Jae picked up the phone, listening to Se7en’s mumbling on the other end.

“Didn’t want to hurt him.” Dong-Wook’s seductive voice rolled over the phone. “Fucker. Son of a bitch.”

“Se7en, he’s not home yet. He called me earlier. He sounded fine and told me not to worry.” Jaejoong sat down on the edge of the bed, jostling Yunho. The other man lifted his head, startled awake by his lover’s motion.

“Who’s that? Minnie-ah?” Yunho asked sleepily.

“No,” Jae covered the phone then wondered why he bothered. “It’s Choi Dong-Wook.”

“Hang up.” Yunho mumbled into his pillow, turning over. “Are you still mad at me?”

“A couple of more hours, maybe. Right now, I’m too tired to be mad so you’re in luck.” Jae shrugged, turning back to Se7en. “Hyung, you need to sleep this off.”

“He left me. Son of a bitch decided that he was just going to take a walk.” Dong-Wook said. “Then my face started hurting, and then my hand started hurting. So I thought I’d just say screw it and drink it off. Now, I’m sitting here sick to my fucking stomach because the little son of a bitch won’t answer his phone and tell me he’s okay.”

“Why does your hand hurt?” Jaejoong asked, listening to Se7en continue to ramble. Turning around, he shook Yunho awake. “I thought you said he didn’t hit you?”

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“What? Yunho sighed, turning over onto his back. “You can’t be serious! Either you’re mad at me and not talking to me or you’re not mad at me and we’re going to get some sleep.”

“Answer me, Yunnie-ah,” Jae poked at him, wedging the phone between his chin and his shoulder. “Why does Se7en’s hand hurt? Did he hit you? Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. He didn’t lay a hand on me.” The leader frowned, then looked up with a glimmer of rage in his eyes. “Bastard better not have hit Changmin.”

“Choi!” Jae barked into the phone. “Did you hit Changmin?”

“What? No! Why the fuck would I hit Minku? Sorry, Minnie-ah.”

“What does Minku mean?” Jae whispered at Yunho.

The other man shrugged. “You’re asking me? Your Japanese is better than mine. Ask Changmin. He’d know.”

“He says he didn’t hit Changmin.” Jae reassured his lover before asking Se7en another question. “Why does your hand hurt?”

“He probably rubbed it raw jerking himself off.” Yunho muttered, rolling aside to avoid Jae’s punch. “What? He’s the one who woke us up. Why are you hitting me?”

“How hard did you punch him?” Jae ignored Se7en’s rambling, the other man a verbal blur over the phone. “He sounds like he’s brain damaged.”

“Maybe he’s drunk. His virgin got away.”

“He is drunk. But he’s not calling for that.” Jaejoong poked at Yunho’s chest. “He’s worried about Changmin. And Minnie-ah isn’t home.”

“Joongie, love, hang up.” Yunho moaned, rolling over and grabbing a pillow to put over his head.

“Se7en,” Jaejoong tried to cut into the man’s angry rant about young teases. “Choi Dong-Wook, listen to me!”

“I’m going to try calling his cell phone again.” Se7en murmured. “And maybe get some thing else to drink.”

“I think that’s the last thing you should do right now.” The singer replied, rubbing at his forehead. “God, Yunnie and I didn’t have this kind of drama and we’re the worst ones of the group.”

“Changmin is always competitive.” Yunho murmured from under his safe feather nest. “Probably felt like he had to one-up you in this too.”

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“Yunnie-ah, do you still have Se7en’s address?” Jae leaned over, landing on his lover’s chest. Yunho grunted, unprepared for the other man’s weight.

“Why?” Lifting the pillow, the leader glared at Jae. “What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to go over there and put him to bed.” Jaejoong cut off Yunho’s protests with a slide of his fingers across his lover’s mouth. “Don’t argue. You’ll lose. And then you’ll be grumpy not only from lack of sleep but also a bruised ego. I’ve not had enough rest to deal with that too. Can we just agree that you’ve lost?”

“I don’t like having these non-arguments with you.” Yunho muttered in a low grumble. “I always lose them and I’ve not even said one word yet. Why do I always have to lose?”

“Because your life’s easier that way.” Jae kissed the end of Yunho’s chin. Speaking into the phone, the singer attempted to get Se7en’s attention. “Choi, I’m going to come over.”

“Oh no,” Dong-Wook stopped his ramble, alarmed at the news. “The son of a bitch Yunho popped me twice because Minku was here. Do you have any fucking idea what he’ll do to me if you come over? What do you want to do to me? Get me killed?”

“He knows I’m coming over. Try not to drink yourself into a stupor. I’ll need you to open the door when I get there.” Hanging up his cell, Jae stood up from the bed, stopped short when Yunho’s fingers grabbed at his waistband. “What, Yunnie-ah?”

“I’ll drive you.” The leader tossed the comforter off of his body, bracing himself for the cold air and even colder floor. “Let me get dressed.”

“No, baby.” With a shake of his head, Jaejoong put his hand on Yunho’s chest. “I need you to stay here. Wait for Changmin to make sure he’s okay and if he calls, someone should be here to answer the phone. He might call the house phone.”

“I don’t want you over there with Se7en, especially alone.” Yunho glowered as well as he could while lying down and stretched out over a soft mattress.

It was hard to look threatening when he was talking to someone who could bring him to his knees with a hooded glance and a moist pout but Yunho tried just the same. Throwing the pillow back onto his face, he mumbled curses into the linens, knowing he’d lost another argument he hadn’t even had a chance to start.

“Pfah,” Jaejoong scoffed, heading to the master bathroom. “He’s not going to do anything. My boyfriend will come and kick his ass.”

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Jaejoong would never get used to the cabs in Japan. It was always a gamble as to what kind of driver he would get. Either he was stuck with one that would poke along the streets and drive up the fare or end up in the back seat of a madman, holding onto the grip and hoping he wasn't ejected from the car if they got into an accident.

He got a madman this time. Lately, he always seemed to get the madmen.

Yunho offered him the car but the sleep in his eyes warned Jae not to drive. It would be better all around if he didn't create yet another crisis to topple over the day. At the rate of the turns and careening around traffic, Jaejoong would have gladly paid the extra fare to arrive in one piece. Or at least to have his stomach intact instead of crawling up his throat in an attempt to escape.

Thanking whichever angel looked after wayward singers either too drunk or too sleepy to make good decisions, Jaejoong entered Se7en's building, stopping at the guard desk for directions. His guardian angel was still at work. Choi Dong-Wook had called down to tell the staff to let him into the apartment.

No mention was made of Se7en's level of inebriation. Jaejoong was thankful for that. Although the sly glances from one of the female guards made him a bit uncomfortable.

"She must think Se7en's got a stable of men he's entertaining up here." Jae realized, suddenly understanding the slow wink he'd gotten when he made eye contact. "God, first Min then Yunho and now me."

The first thing Jaejoong noticed when he stepped into Se7en's apartment was the space. A glorious expanse of artfully arranged modern furniture and electronic equipment spread over polished honey wood floors. And a kitchen that made him ache.

Then, the pool of blood drying down the sides of the granite and oak island separating the kitchen from the living area.

A lot of blood.

"Choi!?" Jaejoong closed the door behind him, alarmed at the darkening brown blotches. Hearing no response, Jae called out again. "Se7en?"

"Sleeping." A murmur came from an L-shaped alcove around the edge of the kitchen. Se7en's bare foot was visible over the edge of the arm of the couch, a thick silver ring snug on his index toe. Jae approached carefully, spotting the broken glass on the floor. "Okay, I'm not sleeping because I can talk."

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“Are you okay? Is that blood?” Jaejoong gasped at the sight of Se7en’s hand. The older man lay on his back, holding his hand palm-side up, leaving the deep gashes open to the air. “What happened? Is Min okay? Wait, I spoke to him. He didn’t say he was bleeding.”

“You guys are...” Se7en blinked, wondering why sobriety came all too quickly. Probably the pain, he reasoned. Although he wasn’t sure if he meant the pain in his heart or the throbbing of his sore body. “When Changmin left here, he was fine. Me, not so much. Not that you care.”

“So long as Min’s okay.” Jae nodded, distracted as he looked around. “Do you have any bandages? Let me clean that up.”

“Ah, so you’re going to play mommy now?” The singer looked up at the fey young man standing next to the couch. “You sure you can do that? I’m not one of your boys.”

“You keep treating me like shit and you’re going to be a girl.” Jae smiled sweetly, reaching nearly the end of his patience. “I’m tired, Dong-Wook. In the past twenty-four hours, my life’s been turned upside down because of you and Changmin. And I’m offering to pick out the glass that’s in your hand. If you were smart, you’d shut up and tell me where your bandages are.”

Se7en opened his mouth to snap back but stopped his tongue at the unforgiving glint in Jaejoong’s eye. Any hint of the dreamer Dong-Wook thought lived inside of Jaejoong’s body had fled and a feral, street urchin had taken his place.

“I don’t know.” Se7en replied. “I’ve never had to use one. I think I saw some things in the guest bathroom.”

“Wait here.” Jae shook his head, stalking off. “Try not to get your head stuck too far up your ass while I’m gone. I don’t want to pull that out too”

Se7en was sitting up when Jaejoong returned, his feet planted firmly on the floor and his dark eyes clouded with pain. Sliding onto the cushions next to the older man, Jae set down the first aid kit he found in the spare bathroom. Flipping open the large metal box, he blew out his breath in silent surprise at the array of medicines and wraps he found inside.

“Wow, whoever stocked your apartment must have thought you’re accident prone.” Jaejoong glanced at the dried film of blood on the floor and reassessed his thoughts. “Actually, I suppose they’re right.”

“This wasn’t an accident.” Se7en hissed when Jaejoong grabbed his wrist, moving sideways as the younger man pulled him around. “I was holding the glass and broke it. I was angry. And I didn’t want to throw it.”

“Ah, so you’re stupid too.” Jae nodded. He nearly remarked that it was good Min left Se7en if he was that stupid but the raw pain in the other man’s

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face stopped him. Leaning back to take a good look at Dong-Wook, Jae sighed. "Oh shit, you really do love him. You just let Yunho beat on you?"

"Did you and Yunho think I was joking?" Se7en tried to pull his hand away but Jaejoong held fast. "I'll do it myself. You didn't need to come over here."

"Someone had to. Who else do you have?"

That was the bare truth of things, Se7en realized. He sat in his apartment amid the ruins of his life and discovered that there was no one to call. The one person he could have shared how he felt had walked out, leaving an echoing emptiness behind. He wanted to tell Jaejoong to fuck off. It was right on the tip of his tongue. The words never came. Only a single silver tear then another, his breath deepening to offset the agony crawling through his soul.

"Aish, Se7en," Jae reached out, wiping at the other man's face, careful not to press too hard. Yunho's fists left a pair of ripe swellings on Se7en's face, subsiding as they purpled to bruises. "I'm sorry. Hell, you're probably feeling just as shitty as the rest of us are. I'm sorry."

"Changmin always said you were the one who patched up everything." Se7en laughed hard at the irony of having Jaejoong at his side, the purported mother of the group, wiping away his sorrows and cleaning his wounds. "Think you can crawl inside of me and kiss the stab wounds Minku left behind?"

"Because that's really what you can do for me, Kim." The last of the drunk faded under his reluctant tears, disappearing fully when Se7en used his free hand to wipe off his face. "Think you can make it all better?"

"Tell Changmin he's an idiot. Hell, tell me I'm an idiot and to walk away from the bastard. I don't even know if I'm in love with him and he didn't even have it in him to stick around when I needed him. What kind of friend is that?"

"I'm sure Yunho didn't help things." Jaejoong murmured, splaying Se7en's hand taut. Delicately working splinters of glass from where they were lodged deep in the other man's palm.

"Oh no, Yunho helped a lot. He showed me I couldn't depend on Changmin." Se7en snorted sarcastically then yelped when the tweezers dug into his tender flesh.

"Try to remember that is my lover and my dongsaeng that you are talking about." Jae looked through his lashes, his brown eyes hard around the edges.

"I'll try to remember as long as you're digging around inside of me." He replied, wincing as another piece of glass was pulled, a fresh stream of



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blood dripping over his thumb mound and onto the towel Jae placed under his hand.

Se7en remained silent for a few minutes, holding still for Jae. While the younger man was concentrating on removing a difficult shard, he leaned forward and murmured, "I'm sorry I made you uncomfortable during the show that time. I didn't mean too."

"Oh, and they say I can't keep a secret." Jae shook his head, amazed at how many of his secrets were spilled out as if from a cut rice bag. "Who do I kill? Yunho or Changmin."

"I'd say Minnie-ah since I want him dead right now but the truth is, Yunho had the pleasure of throwing that in my face."

"It's okay, Se7en." A shrug dismissed the tremors Jaejoong had that day, a shivering visitation of men's hands pawing over him. "I think it was just an off day for me and I had to behave for the cameras. Sometimes I just want to close the door and tell the world to go away but I can't."

"I want that too, sometimes." Se7en nodded.

"Do you really love Changmin?" Jae asked, tenderly washing the cuts with saline to clear off the blood.

"You do use that pretty face to just worm your way into things, don't you?" He had to smile despite the fatigue and pain, seeing the humour in Jae's soft, shy smile. Se7en thought on the question before answering, wanting to be honest with the young man that Changmin adored.

"Do I love him?" Se7en asked himself. He thought of the young man he'd woken up next to just a few hours ago, the same one he'd fallen asleep on, talking about things that he might never achieve but wanted to reach. Min held so many of his secrets, little wishes he'd not shared with anyone; even discovering some he'd not known he had.

Changmin was one of those starry-eyed wishes he'd found in his dreams. And now it lay extinguished before it had even flared to life.

"Yeah, I love him." Se7en nodded, his face serious with thought. "I wanted to be in love with him because I thought; here's my friend. This guy can make me laugh and show me things that I've already seen thousands of times before and until he pointed them out to me, it meant nothing. Shit, Jaejoong, he's got me watching people and imagining where they're going and who they're waiting for."

"I don't daydream like that." Dong-Wook told the other man. Jaejoong sat silent, listening to Se7en's soul break open. "I wanted to daydream like that a little while longer before I had to figure out if ..."

"Figure out if you were in love with him?"

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“Yeah, that.” He said, his voice tired and flat. Se7en stared down at the damage he’d done to himself, thinking that he probably broke the glass just to have control over something. He wasn’t sure when he’d lost control but it was definitely some time immediately after he met Changmin.

“What are you going to do, Dong-Wook?” Jae inspected his handiwork. If he met Se7en’s eyes, he knew he’d throw himself into maneuvering Changmin back to the older man. Jaejoong was very much aware of his romantic streak. He avoided it as much as possible. The group had enough meddlers without his joining into the fracas.

“I guess I’m just going to have to wait.” The singer shrugged.

“Do you have it in you to wait?” Jae now looked up, already embracing the knowledge he was doomed. He might as well face Se7en’s anguish squarely and open-heartedly.

“No,” Dong-Wook replied. “I don’t. And right now, I just want to make sure that he’s home and safe. That’s all I really want. I just need to know he’s safe.”

Jae dabbed the last cut with antiseptic, contemplating what to say next. Grabbing a sterile bandage, Jaejoong unraveled the end, hoping to wrap up Se7en’s hand until he could see to it. “I think it won’t be long before you hear from Changmin. Once he loves, he never gives it up. He’s like Yunho that way.”

“Well, he is your son.” Se7en teased a smile from Jaejoong, laughing at the shy duck of Jae’s head.

“You’re that way too. Yunho and you are a lot alike in some ways.” Jaejoong murmured. “And you know what they say about children, they always fall in love with men who remind them of their fathers.”

# 19

Changmin nested down into his chair, ordering a refill of his tea and ensuring the shop's acquiescence to his squatting by sending a hefty tip along with the waitress, something normally unheard of in a shop catering to college students. It would assure him solitude and silence.

It was a technique he'd learned from Se7en.

Secluded in his alcove, Changmin waited for his cell phone to ring, sipping his tea and ignoring the rumbling in his belly. The chirrup of his ringtone startled him, his lack of sleep dragging down his eyelids. Flipping it open to answer, he took a deep breathe, both dreading and thrilled for the phone call back.

"Nuna," Changmin turned in his chair, keeping his face hidden from the other shop patrons. The morning rush had passed and the place was nearly empty save a few dedicated students studying at the front of the store. "Thank you for calling back."

"It isn't a problem, Minnie-ah." Scarlet's husky voice was a balm to Min's shattered nerves. "Thank you for waiting for a few minutes. I don't wake up often in the morning. I needed coffee to wake up."

"Oh, I am sorry." A flood of guilt hit him. The torch singer worked long hours at Trance and probably had just fallen asleep when Changmin called her. "I shouldn't have bothered you."

"No, it's fine, matamis." The transvestite reassured him, a soothing tone that wasn't unlike Jaejoong's when Min was feeling down. He could see where Jae had been influenced by the big-hearted wo/man. "Are you someplace safe? You don't sound very well, honey."

"I'm okay." Min looked about the shop, smiling at the normalcy of the world around him despite how he felt inside. "I'm at a tea shop."

"Ah, ever the responsible one. Most men I know would be looking at the bottom of soju bottle if I heard them sounding like you do."

"I didn't know who else to call."

"Jaejoong?"

"Ah, no." Min murmured softly into the phone. "He would listen and then not give advice because he thinks he's making me like men."

## Tarnished Angels

“Oh, bunso.” Scarlet pressed her hand to her mouth, wishing she could give solace to her Jaejoong. “That’s not true. Do you feel like he’s influenced you?”

“No, nuna.” Min grinned despite his sadness. “I think knowing Jae has helped me realize that it doesn’t matter what body someone is born into so long as you love them.”

Changmin laughed, nervous at being overheard. Sticking to Korean, he murmured. “I am in public. Well sort of. I feel embarrassed.”

“There’s nothing to be ashamed of, Minnie-ah.” She reassured him, a gentle coaxing tone. “We’ll keep it low and between us. Chances are, no one there will understand what you’re saying.”

“There’s no one really around.” He replied. “I’m in the back and away from everyone. I guess I’m just not used to talking about Se7en and how I feel about him.”

“Ah, you do aim for the larger fish in the pond.” Scarlet teased, knowing the young man well enough to imagine the red creeping over his face. “Tell me what happened.”

Changmin started at the beginning; from the party held for Se7en and how the older man joined him outside on the balcony, then the relationship that sprang up between them, whispered phone calls late at night to talk about things. He spoke of the flirtations that followed, mostly on Se7en’s side until Min stepped tentatively into the game. He brushed lightly over the intimacy they’d had in the back of the town car and Scarlet was wise enough to let that pass without asking for details, trying to keep the young man engaged until he spilled everything he needed to say.

“Where did you end up with this?” She asked when there was a small snuffle from the phone line. He was crying. Scarlet could hear that but the young man’s pride demanded she not notice. She was also wise enough to know when a man’s ego was too fragile to be handled.

“He told Yunho that he might be falling in love with me and I walked out.” Min said. “Well I walked out after we talked a little bit. I can’t even tell you what we said. I don’t remember. I didn’t get much sleep. And no, before you ask, we didn’t do anything to keep me awake. Just talked. I just couldn’t see how this was going to work between us.”

“Why, bunso?” Scarlet took a mug of coffee from her lover, smiling a thank you at him as he sat down to read the morning paper, dislodging a cat from the couch. “What is he asking of you that he didn’t before?”

“It’s just,” Changmin chafed at his thoughts, muddled and tangled with his emotions. “He changed the rules. We weren’t supposed to fall in love. We weren’t even supposed to talk about it. There’s no forever. None of that.”

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Now he's talking like I'm going to be Jaejoong and stare at him longingly when we're in public. I'm not like that. He can be Jaejoong and stare at me."

"I don't think that he's asking you to stare at him as if he's a piece of candy." Scarlet laughed. "Did Dong-Wook ask you to change how you acted towards him? Or tell you that he's wanting more from you?"

"No." Min admitted slowly. "We're both so busy. I don't have time for love. Neither does he."

"Who says that you have to have a lot of time to love." Scarlet glanced coyly at the stone-faced man sitting next to her, his attention fixed on the paper. "I love someone that can't be here all the time. We make it work. We see each other when we can but that doesn't mean I love him any less or that he loves me any more. We're together even if we're apart."

"Don't define your relationship by others' rules, Minnie-ah." She said carefully, trying to persuade the younger man to consider what he wanted. "What works for one couple might not work for another. You like being independent. And from what you've said, so does Dong-Wook. Don't assume that he wants to live in your nose like Jaejoong and Yunho do."

"I don't think I'd want that relationship. They are always together and when they're not, they're planning on being together." Min sighed. "There's no space or room to breathe."

"But that's how they like it, ne?" Scarlet asked. "Let me ask you if you love Dong-Wook, because really, that's what you need to look at. He's offering a part of himself that you can reject or accept. He didn't ask you to fall in love with him. He asked nothing of you."

"True." Changmin considered what Se7en told him. "He was mad at me though."

"After you told him you were walking out on your relationship." She reminded him. "And you aren't just walking out of the physical intimacies you two were working towards. From what you said, you were also walking away from all of the emotional bonds that you forged with him. How else do you expect him to react?"

"I didn't listen to him. I did what other people do to me all the time." Min picked at his napkin, shredding the ends into small balls of confetti. "He's always paid attention to what I said. Even when I was going to walk away from him, he was listening to me."

"Is he your friend, matamis?" Scarlet petted the one-eyed cat she'd rescued from the river, rubbing at his ears until he purred loud enough for Min to hear him over the phone.

"Yes." Min whispered, softly and with another loud snuffle. Wiping at his face, he couldn't seem to stop his nose from running nor halt the creeping

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emotional tightness in his throat. "I honestly thought about calling him first then I realized I couldn't. That was so hard. I talk to him about everything."

"Do you want advice?" Scarlett asked. "Or do you think you know what you are going to do?"

"No, I know." Changmin replied. "Thank you for listening to me, nuna."

"I'm always here for you, bunso." She replied. Her lover reached for her hand, patting her fingers before returning to his reading. Smiling to herself, Scarlet knew there was unspoken affection in that casual touch, promises made and kept with the touch of fingers on her skin. "You call me back and tell me what you've decided to do."

"Or better yet," She whispered into the phone. "Tell me more about what you did in the back of the car. I love that boy's mouth."



Dong-Wook stretched his arms up over his head, listening to the crack of his spine as he worked the tension from his body. The shower he took proved what he'd already suspected; his ribs were a jigsaw of bruises and welts from where he hit the floor and cabinets.

The tea kettle spouted, a forlorn whistle calling for his attention in the kitchen. Padding across the floor, he reminded himself to thank Jaejoong again, the other man cleaning up the glass and blood before he left. Standing in the emptiness of his apartment, Se7en wondered if it wouldn't be a good time to head to the U.S. before he started becoming maudlin about Japan.

His cell phone still bore no calls from Changmin, only messages left by his manager and work crew, hoping he was feeling alright, having begged off with a bug. He'd have to explain the hand and bruises in the coming days. No one would believe him if he said he was in a fight. He wasn't known to have tussles. Those kind of things were better left to others in his stable.

Taking a cup of chai to the coffee table, he set it down before flopping onto the couch where he poured out his miseries to Jaejoong. The pretty-faced young man had teeth, Se7en thought to himself. He'd be more careful about his teasing when Jae was around. If he'd known there was a feisty, sensual streak in Jaejoong, he'd have challenged Yunho for the young man's heart.

"As if you'd have a chance." He snorted aloud.

No, he'd instead stumbled over the unfolding Changmin, and suffered much greater wounds to his heart than he would have gotten from Yunho's fists had he even thought about chasing after Jaejoong.

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“That is God telling me to stay away from the Dong Bang boys.” Se7en lifted his cup in a mock salute. “Thank you. I get it now. I’ll never do it again.”

He turned his head when the door opened, wondering if the management downstairs had tried to reach him while he’d been deep in thought. Checking the house phone’s receiver, there was no blinking light to indicate a message. Leaning his head back, Se7en eyed the man closing the door behind him, warily standing up to greet Changmin as he entered the main living area.

“Hey.” Se7en had to give Min credit. The young man met him eye to eye, strong and without challenge.

“Hey yourself.” Dong-Wook was reluctant to give any more than that. He didn’t trust himself to say anything beyond the basics. His tongue could handle that much. “You could have mailed the key. You didn’t have to come back to return it.”

“I wasn’t returning it.” Changmin walked into the kitchen, keenly aware of Se7en’s blood-shot eyes following him. Spotting the wraps around the other man’s hand, Min moved quickly towards him. “What happened?”

Se7en waved him off before he could come any closer. Keeping Min at a distance seemed like the smartest thing he could do right now. “I cut myself. I’m okay. Jaejoong came over to fix it.”

“Are you saying that to make me mad?” Min squinted at Se7en before finding the chai tea leaves and pouring himself a cup of water to steep them in.

“No, really. He came over after I called your house after downing a bottle of whiskey. I’m sure he came just to make sure I didn’t puke myself to death.” Dong-Wook leaned against the counter, resting his weight on his elbows. The younger man moved with a careful grace, as if each movement cost him energy. “If you check your cell phone, you’ve got about seventy-five messages from me asking you to call when you get home. I’m sure I sound pissed off in the beginning and the drunker I got, the stupider I sounded. By the last one, I think I started singing into your voice mail.”

“Ah,” Min met Se7en’s gaze, knowing he’d better start talking or the other man would toss him out on his ear. “I’ll check them later. I needed to come back here...”

“Why did you come back here?” The other man interrupted. “Last time I saw you, you were walking out of the door forever. Never to be heard from again. Now you’re here making tea like nothing’s happened.”

“No, not like nothing’s happened.” Min corrected. “Neither one of us can take back what we’ve said.”

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"I'm too tired for this, Minku." Se7en rubbed at his face, the long day catching up with him. "I was tired before this all started and I'm even more tired now that I've been beat up, walked out on, cut up my hand, got stinking fucking drunk and then pawed over by one of the prettiest guys I've ever seen in my life and my body didn't even get hard with him touching me."

"So, tell me, Changmin," Dong-Wook stared at the man standing at the other end of the kitchen counter. "What exactly is it you want?"

"I wanted to say I'm sorry." Min whispered. He was no longer sure of Se7en's mood. The other man certainly deserved to be sour after everything that had been said and done. Changmin could only hope for their friendship. "I've made a mistake. And I'm sorry."

"Spell it out for me, Min." The other man's voice was a deep dangerous river filled with rocks Min wanted desperately to avoid. "You tell me exactly what the fuck you're saying because I can tell you exactly what the hell I was thinking when that door closed behind you the first time."

"Yeah, I shouldn't have said anything to Yunho. Forgive me for that." Se7en's voice was tight, the control over his temper tenuous at best. "But see, we've said so many other things to each other, I figured you'd at least stick around long enough to hear me say to you that I think we shouldn't put any boundaries on where we were going or even how we got there."

"See, Minku," The other man leaned forward, watching Changmin's face. "I love you. I could be in love with you. You've said that you love me. And that I'm the best fucking friend that you had."

"If that were true, then you treated me like shit when I've done nothing but tried to give you space and time to learn who you want to be and when you wanted to be it." Se7en shrugged, tucking his hands into his pockets as if he couldn't trust himself, wincing as he jostled the cuts along his palm.

"You don't treat the other members like this. I know that. I think considering what we're supposed to have been...or are, you could have given me a few minutes of your time with an open mind." Min saw a brush of tears flick across Se7en's eyelashes. "And I'm just too damned tired to care right now."

"I was wrong to have left. I should have stayed to at least talk to you. To listen to you." Changmin said. "And I'm sorry I didn't. I really am."

"What do you want me to do with that, then?"

"I don't know." The younger man admitted. He really didn't want the tea. He'd had more than his share of tea in the hours since he left Se7en's apartment but it gave his hands something to do. "I don't want to lose my friend. I realized that afterwards. I was going to lose you. And I shouldn't ever do that."



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“Okay,” Se7en put his hands on the small of his back, fatigue seeping into his bones. “Thank you.”

“That’s it? Thank you?” Min quirked an eyebrow. “That’s all you’re going to say?”

“No,” Se7en walked through the kitchen area and opened the front door, jerking his head towards the foyer. “I’m also saying get out.”

“Se7en...” Changmin reached for the older man, flinching when Se7en pulled free. “Please, I’m sorry.”

“I know.” He nodded. “And I believe you. But I can’t deal with any more tonight...today, whatever the hell time it is. I really can’t absorb anything else. So, it would be better if you left.”

“And here, take this with you, Minku.” Se7en pulled the house key from the lock. “Don’t think about using it until I tell you that you can. I’m going to go get some sleep and then take some time to think about what the hell I’m getting myself into. Call my phone when you get home. I won’t answer because I’m going to pass out but at least leave a message. I want to know that you’re safe.”

“You want to know what’s even fucking worse?” Se7en grabbed Min’s waist, pulling the young man against him. Capturing Min’s lips with his mouth, Se7en drank deeply, slowly pulling an erotic moan from Min’s slender body. Answering with one of his own, the older man crushed his fingers into Changmin’s hair, holding him tightly until both of them were gasping for air.

“The worst thing about this is that I still fucking think I’m in love with you.” Se7en yanked himself free of Min’s torso, catching at Min’s wrist before the young man stumbled. The rush of cold air between them froze the heat they’d conjured, whisking it away into nothing. “Now go the fuck home and call me when you get there. ‘Cause so help me God, if I don’t have at least a voice mail from your sorry ass, I’m going to go down there and beat you senseless for making me worry.”

# 20

“It’s been nearly two weeks, Susu.” Changmin grouched, standing under the edge of the balcony’s awning.

Tokyo’s weather turned once more, the spring sunshine turning rancid and a heavy icy rain fell around them. Dry under the covering, Min slouched in one of the plastic lawn chairs they’d brought up on the freight elevator, hoping to recreate some of the atmosphere they’d had on the roof of their Seoul apartment. So far, they’d succeeded marginally, usually only going outside during one of the city’s sunnier days.

He’d been fraught with worry after leaving Se7en’s apartment. That worry soon turned to grumpiness when a few days later he’d gotten a voice mail from the older man telling Min he’d be in Hong Kong for a couple of weeks. There was nothing affectionate in the message, not even the nickname Min had come to expect to hear from Se7en.

Min was about to leave grumpy and move to pissed off.

“He left you the message.” Junsu commented, taking a sip of his tea. It scorched his tongue, leaving a burred feeling behind. “That’s more than I would have given you.”

“Thanks.” Min grimaced at his friend, wrinkling his nose. “It’s good to know you’re a dear friend who loves me.”

“I do love you.” The tenor shrugged, blowing on his tea. “But I would have punched you. Or something.”

“Where do you think he is?” Min hunkered down against the chair, putting his feet up on an overturned planter. The young man’s long legs ached, the rigors of practice coupled with his new found interest in long walks, driving himself to exhaustion so he didn’t stay up late at night waiting for his phone to ring.

His phone never rang.

“He’s in Hong Kong.” Another tentative sip proved too hot as well and Junsu hissed air over his tongue, hoping to ease the burn. “Don’t you think he would have called you if he’d come home.”

“I’m not so sure Japan is home anymore.” Min bit at his lower lip.

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He was going to refuse to cry. He'd cried enough in the sanctuary of his own room. He'd not do it in front of Junsu. The other man would never let him forget it.

Damn it, Min thought, wiping at his face. Damn him for leaving and not letting me talk to him.

"Do you want to be alone?" Junsu snuck a peek at his friend, seeing the trail of a tear crossing over Min's cheek and down his face.

"No." Changmin sniffed, trying to clear his mind of Se7en. It was proving harder than it sounded.

He saw reminders Se7en in places he never thought to look for him, often seeing something and reminding himself to bring it up when the older man called. But the call hadn't come yet. And Min's heart ached to hear the other's voice.

He slept at night with the kitsune, holding it under his chin. Min hated himself for that weakness and he wanted to put it aside but every time he pulled it from its place on the night stand and tucked it under his hand before going to bed. If he couldn't hear Se7en's voice then he would at least hold onto a memory of the other man's laughter.

"God, I hate him." The youngest muttered, wishing for anything to wipe his thoughts.

"Really?" Junsu was finally able to sip at his tea without scalding his mouth. "It sounds like you miss him."

"I do." Changmin grumbled. "And I hate him for it."



Dong-Wook unlocked the front door of his apartment, slinging the duffel bag from his shoulder onto the floor. The trip to Hong Kong had been rough, photos and then interviews, all stacked on top of one another until he no longer knew what day it was. His entire body ached from the flight and the promise of being able to sleep in his own bed nearly made him weep with joy.

The fact that his bed was empty of Changmin merely made him weep.

Despite the heavy downpour outside, the apartment was well lit. Too well lit, in fact; thought Se7en as he noticed the overhead track lights were on. Sighing at leaving them that way for half a month, he decided he didn't care, heading into the kitchen for a beer.

Then he spotted TVfXQ's leader stretched out on the couch, reading from a stack of magazines he'd left on the coffee table and his blood went cold.

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“How the fuck did you get in here?” Se7en came around the counter, spotting the keychain he’d given Min laying on the table. “Did he tell you to bring that back?”

Yunho looked up, casually closing the periodical as if he had every right to squat in Dong-Wook’s home, his head canted back with a cockiness Se7en wanted to wipe clean off.

“Nope.” The younger man hooked an arm over the back of the couch. “He doesn’t know I’m here.”

“Did you sit in here every day until I came home or do I have to kill someone for giving you my flight plans?”

“I’d think you’d be much happier if you would shut up and let me talk.” Yunho stood, brushing off the front of his jeans. Shoulder to shoulder, Yunho was slighter in body but Se7en didn’t let that fool him. The other singer was a terror and stronger than he looked.

“You break into my house and you expect me to stand here to listen to you?” Se7en snorted. “Get out.”

“Jaejoong suggested that I apologize.” Stepping closer to Se7en, Yunho laughed. “He told me you were coming in today and I should head over here to work things out with you.”

“You always do what the wife tells you to do?”

Once again, Se7en cursed his own mouth. Yunho’s reaction was a controlled flicker of violence across of a stone-cold face. Then a reptilian smile chilled his features even more.

“Call him my wife again,” Yunho stepped forward, nearly touching Se7en’s chest with his own. “And I’ll break every damned bone in your body. I’m not going to listen to you talk shit about Joongie.”

“You’re right,” Se7en ignored Yunho’s threatening posture. Holding up his hands, Se7en offered a tacit surrender. “Jaejoong did come back to patch me up. You’re the asshole. I shouldn’t have said anything bad about him. Say what you have to say and leave. I’m tired and I need a shower.”

“You should have called Min while you were gone.” Pursing his mouth, Yunho watched Se7en’s face close up tight. The mere mention of the youngest member of the group set off a nerve. “Did you mean what you said about him?”

“That he’s a son of a bitch who shouldn’t just take off because things get too tough?” Se7en nodded. “Yeah, I meant that. And you’re here for an apology. Not to talk about my relationship with Changmin.”

## Tarnished Angels

“There shouldn’t be a relationship.” Yunho commented sourly. Se7en had stepped away, clearly dismissing Yunho as he turned around to retrieve a beer from the fridge.

“I don’t know why you think you can tell Minku what he can’t and can do.” The singer popped open his bottle and collapsed onto the wide chair next to the couch, taking a deep swig before running the sweating glass over his face. He had a headache and wasn’t prepared to do any sparring, verbal or other wise, with TVfXQ’s leader. “He’s not a little boy, Yunho.”

“He’s too young for you.”

“God, you really don’t know him well, do you?” Se7en leaned forward, drops of water glistening on his jaw and cheek. “Minku isn’t a baby. He’s never been a child and he’s certainly much more of an adult in his mind than you’ll ever be. You posture about being the leader and you probably are a good one but you sound like an old man, Yunho. An old man that’s stuck in what he sees is right and doesn’t grow.”

“I’m surprised you’re with Jaejoong. Fucking a guy just seems beyond you sometimes.” Se7en inwardly winced. He would later blame his loose tongue on his fatigue. He hoped he wouldn’t have to blame his loose teeth on the fist Yunho had clenched at his side.

“Jae said you were nasty when you were pissed.” The other man shook his head, his mouth a twist of sardonic humour.

“Do you let anyone tell you how to love Jaejoong?” Se7en asked softly. Looking at the younger man’s face flow from anger to a gentle tenderness, Se7en knew the answer before Yunho could even open his mouth. “Yeah, I thought not.

“I’m going to say this once. And not because it’s any of your business but because Min loves you and for some reason, thinks highly of you.” He set the bottle down. Needing to gather his thoughts, Se7en rested his elbows on his knees, contemplating his words. Yunho paced off the couch then sat, watching the rain hit the long windows.

“Changmin is first and foremost, my friend. Just like Jaejoong is yours.” Se7en held up his hand to stop Yunho from speaking. “Let me finish before you start harassing me.”

“Loving him is new to me. I’ve not loved someone before. Yeah, I’ve liked women and men enough to want them around me for a few months but not like this.” Dong-Wook pursed his lips then smiled at the thought of Changmin’s hesitant playfulness and willing grins when the mood struck him. “You have the other four members and I don’t think you know how lucky you are. And you are in love with your best friend. From where you sit, Yunho, everything is easily understood.”

## Tarnished Angels

“It’s not like that for all of us.” Picking up his beer bottle, Se7en swallowed a sip, letting the cold liquid pour down his throat. “I have a couple of friends but Changmin is the first person I’ve had in my life that I talk to about everything. Even the stupid small things because sometimes, they turn out to be so important.”

“I love him.” Se7en pointed out. “I’m not saying I’m in love with him. And I’m not asking him to be in love with me. Right now, I don’t like him for what he’s done but that doesn’t mean I want him out of my life. I want him in my life so fucking much that I asked him for some time so I could get my head straight instead of risking hurting him.”

“And if you can’t understand that,” He shrugged. “Then you’re stupider than I gave you credit for. And I’ve given you a lot of credit for stupidity so that’ll blow my mind.”

Yunho stared out at the wet city for so long, Se7en wondered if he’d fallen asleep and was dreaming. He snorted to himself. He wasn’t so tired that he’d dream that Yunho came over and was now listening to him talk about Changmin.

“Okay.” Yunho nodded slowly. “So you’re asking me to just let things settle between you?”

“I’m not asking you anything.” Se7en replied with a grin. “You don’t get a say in this. You’re not going to be in this thing between me and Min. I’m telling you how things are between us from my point of view.”

“Then why didn’t you call him?” The leader turned and cocked his head.

“More things that aren’t your business.” Se7en reminded him.

“It is my business when you make him cry.”

“I didn’t mean to make him cry.” Guilt flooded Se7en. He’d just been too busy and every time he picked up the phone, his heart murmured that it still hurt. He hadn’t been ready to hear the husky sweetness of Minku’s voice, especially when he was too far away to tell the younger man to come over and they’d talk. No, he needed to be someplace nearby when they spoke. He owed himself that much.

“We both needed time, Yunho. The pissed off parts of our minds had to go away first. But I love him. No matter what happens between us, I love him. I’m not throwing away us because he was willing to do so on a whim.” The rain outside grew heavy, running streams down the glass. It was as if the world was washing away the dirt around Se7en and he was grateful for it. He’d sleep better cleansed of all the troubles he’d heaped on his soul.

“Now get the hell out so I can go to bed.” Se7en stood. “I’m about to fall over. Save your apologies for later. I’m sure you’ll have more and I’ve got to get a few out of my system.”

## Tarnished Angels

“If Jae asks, tell him I said I’m sorry.” Yunho grabbed the key he’d taken from Changmin. He’d tuck it back into the younger man’s backpack.

“Shit, if Jae asks, I’ll even tell him you almost sounded like you meant it.”



Changmin heard Jaejoong calling for him from down the hall. Thinking the shout was for dinner, he was about to close his laptop when the older man came into his room, holding a thick parchment envelope. Min eyed Jae when he handed him the envelope, curious at the scrawling kanji on its front.

“What’s this?” Taking the packet, Min turned it over, deciphering his name and address on the front.

“I’m guessing mail.” Jaejoong shrugged. “It came in today. I was wondering if it was fan mail but it came here to the house.”

“And,” Jaejoong turned his head to see the writing, pointing out to the younger man a character written in red next to Changmin’s name. “I think that says minku. Either that or whale. I’m not that good with uncommon kana characters.”

“No, that’s right,” Changmin bit his lip, letting the pain work into his mouth. “It’s minku.”

“Do you want me to close the door?” The singer headed out, stopping before he left.

“Please.” Min trusted himself to nod. His heart was pounding and he couldn’t breathe. “I don’t want Junsu or Yoochun to come in. Can you keep them out if they look like they’re heading down here?”

“Yeah,” Changmin knew he could always depend on Jaejoong to help him manage the other two boisterous members. “I’ll let you know when dinner gets here. We’re ordering in an hour.”

“Thanks.” Min didn’t hear the door close, his ears were filled with a rushing noise, panic and stress overloading his senses. He feared opening the envelope, but it was inevitable. He wouldn’t be able to not open it. He just hoped it didn’t hold Se7en’s last words to him.

With trembling fingers, Min opened the flap, pulling out a long sheet of paper written in Korean and several photographs, all showing Se7en in Hong Kong. Some were formal, posed shots for public relations but others were casual, including one of him and Taebin eating bao on a bridge in a garden, their mouths stuffed nearly full and wide with silly grins. Laughing despite his nervousness, Changmin put the photos aside and began to read the letter, his fingers finding the kitsune hidden under his pillow.

## Tarnished Angels

*"Minku,*

*By the time you're reading this, I'll be...actually I don't where I'll be. I don't know where I am now. Well, I'm in the hotel but I couldn't tell you which one to save my life.*

*I thought about calling you. God, I think about calling you every day and night. I miss hearing you. I miss having you in my day. And I miss having you in my life. Right now is the hardest time for me because I know we both needed to think about what we said and how we said it. We hurt one another. And no one can hurt like someone you love.*

*I'm not a very good writer. If it's not lyrics then most of the time, I text everything. But I thought instead of a phone call that would make me want to be near you, I should write you a letter to tell you why I want to be near you. I don't think you understand that about me.*

*So here goes. Don't laugh."*

Changmin couldn't help but laugh. Se7en's sketch of a goofy-eyed fox made him laugh. He would blame Se7en for that later.

*"I love you. That's the first thing I need to remind you. I loved you before I wondered if I'm in love with you. You make me think about how to feel. You make me wonder what is out there in the world that I've not seen. And you bring to me a view of the people and things around me that I've not even considered. I've spent a lot of my life being Se7en and sometimes I forget that I'm also Dong-Wook. I don't even know who that is anymore. And you've made me realize that I should know who I am.*

*How weird is that?*

*God you make me ache. You do. I see you and I want to crawl up inside of you and stay. Not just sexually because I want to do that too but because I want to see the world through your eyes. It's so different from what I see. It's like you have a prism that you peer through and everything is more brilliantly coloured. I like seeing the world that way.*

*Without you, my world is grey and bleak.*

*That's how I first knew I was falling in love with you. Not because you make me laugh or because I like the blush you get when I embarrass you. It was because when I'm not with you, I still can see the colours you've left behind in my eyes."*

Min looked away from the letter, breathing up to dry his eyes. He didn't want to smear the ink with his tears, but the swelling in his soul demanded something from him and his body responded with the only thing it could do, weep with emotion.



## Tarnished Angels

*"I'm coming back in a few days. On Friday afternoon, I think. I don't know what condition I'll be in when I get back because I'm dead tired now and I still have a few more days of this crap to go through. But it's important crap. That's another thing I like about you. You understand what I go through because you go through it yourself.*

*If we decide to do this thing, because we keep calling it a thing, we're going to have to work to regain the trust in each other. I know this. I'm willing to do this. I hope you are too.*

*I'll leave my cell phone on Friday night. If you want to call. I'm leaving this up to you, Minku. Because I promised I would let you decide how fast we move. I'm still here if you want me.*

*Love you.*

*Even when you piss me the fuck off, I love you.*

*Se7en."*

# 21

The call came late. They always did. Se7en wasn't expecting the phone to ring, thinking Min would need some time to decide if he wanted to ever speak to him again. Still, his heart beat a chirrup as he reached for the phone he'd left on his night stand, laying flat on his back as he answered.

"Hey." Somewhere along the way, Min picked up a husky contralto and it shivered desire through Se7en's body.

"Hey back, Minku." They would leave it light. They would have to or Se7en wouldn't be able to survive the phone call. He wasn't sure he'd survive it anyway. "What time is it?"

"Isn't that my line?" Changmin laughed. "I don't know. That's what I have you for."

"Then you're never going to be late. I don't even set my watches." Looking at his alarm clock, Se7en replied. "It's only a little after midnight."

"I thought it would be too soon to call you on Friday so I waited until Saturday." Min played with the corner of his sheet, trying to keep his emotions under control. There was just too much he wanted to say to the other man but the tightness in his chest warned him off of spilling out everything on the tip of his tongue. Choosing something to say was difficult. He thought he'd ask about Se7en's trip.

"I miss you."

"What the hell is wrong with my mouth?" Changmin said to himself, hissing in frustration.

"I like how you sometimes talk out loud when you think you're not." Se7en teased.

"God, did I say that too?" Min sighed, turning over onto his stomach and burying his face into his pillows. "I'm an idiot."

"But a cute idiot." The other man smiled, rubbing at his stomach. "I've missed you too."

"I'm sorry. God I'm sorry." He couldn't stop his mind from rambling, spilling everything that he wanted to say to Se7en after the older man kicked him out of his apartment. "And I don't know how to take it all back. I wish I could."

## Tarnished Angels

“Baby, you can’t take any of it back. That’s just something you have to remember. Every thing that you say is out there.” Se7en replied. “And it’s okay. If you want it to be okay.”

“I do.” Min whispered. “I just don’t know where to start.”

“We start from where we want to start. Make a few rules. Break a few rules.” He grabbed at the earpiece of his phone, fitting the jack into the headphone slot. Arranging the cord so he could speak into the receiver, Se7en set the hand set down and folded his arms behind his back, settling in comfortably. “We’re going to hurt each other, Minku. Did you think that we wouldn’t?”

“It just seems my side hurt you more.”

“Ah, yeah well, your side also sent a medic over to patch me up.” Se7en stared at the palm he’d injured. All of the cuts were healed, leaving nothing but the memory of that night behind. “And he was a very sexy nurse.”

“You’re not supposed to think of Joongie that way.” Min reminded him, trying to shove aside the jealousy that flared up from Se7en’s words. “Only me, remember?”

“Baby, you can come over and play sexy nurse for me any day.” There was a dark evil in Se7en’s seductive chuckle. Min wasn’t sure if he liked it more than it scared him. But he knew he liked it. “I’m thinking some very high, tight white shorts and a white tank top but no shoes. Your feet are sexy as hell. I like how your little toe curls under the one next to it.”

“Nope, you’re scaring me.” Changmin admitted with a nervous laugh. “It sounds like you’ve thought that out too much.”

“Nope, that just came off the top of my head.” He replied, murmuring at the uneasiness in Min’s voice. “You okay, Minku?”

“No. Yes.” Min sighed. “I got your letter...”

“I figured since you called me, even though you waited until Saturday.”

“Do we want to talk about your letter?” Stretching, Min burrowed down into his sheets, feeling a slight chill coming from the open window near his bed.

“Do you want to talk about my letter?”

“I don’t know. No.” Min decided. “I don’t know what to say. I don’t even know what to do. I was too scared that I’d never talk to you again. And then I got pissed off because it felt like you had control over everything and then you passed it back to me in that letter.”

“What am I supposed to do?” He asked.

## Tarnished Angels

Over the past two weeks in Se7en's absence, even the gremlin in the back of his head disserted him, leaving an echoing emptiness in his thoughts, only kept company by the nagging doubts that seemed to crop up like weeds. He'd avoided any entertainment sites on the internet, not wanting to see pictures or videos of Se7en doing anything with anyone.

He didn't go so far as to delete the other man's songs from his MP3 player. There was only so much he could deny himself. Min wasn't going to go that insane.

"What do you want to do?"

"Will you stop answering my questions with more questions." He hissed, frustrated and surprisingly, aroused by Se7en's voice. "God, you're driving me nuts."

"Good, now we're finally even." Se7en purred. "Do you really want me to lead you around? I thought you wanted to be the adult. To make your own decisions. That means, baby, you're held accountable for your own actions as well as choosing what to do. I decided I needed some time to work and to think. I thought and I wrote down what I thought and sent it to you. Now's when you have to decide what you want to do."

"I should make you stew on it for two weeks then write you a letter, then." Min grumbled. "You don't know how much that killed me."

"It killed me too." The older man admitted, biting on his lower lip. "God, there were times when I wanted to fly home and just kiss you until you couldn't breathe and then come right back. My director would have killed me but I would have done it."

"Why didn't you?"

"Because it was too soon. I was still pissed." He shrugged, more for himself than for Min who couldn't see. "Hell, I'm still pissed but at least I'm able to talk to you now without just wanting to toss you into bed and have you. That's really why I needed room. Getting that angry at you just made me want you more and I didn't think you were at a point that you could have handled it if I grabbed you and tossed you naked on a bed."

"It would have been nice for me but I think scary for you." Se7en said.

Min didn't know what to say. Or rather, the words he wanted to say were stuck in his too dry throat.

"No, you're right. That would have been scary." The thought of it scared Min right at that moment, imaging Se7en's strong hands on his naked body, spreading fingers into places that hadn't yet been touched. "That scared the hell out of me."

"I'm a bad influence on you." Se7en purred. "You're swearing now."

## Tarnished Angels

“Sorry.” Changmin replied automatically, deep felt apologies cloaked in formal language.

“Relax, Minku. I won’t tell anyone.” The older man heard the tremor from the other man, a quaking undertone in Min’s voice. “Baby, if this is scaring you, we don’t have to...”

“No, it’s not that.” Min admitted. “I don’t know if I’ve ever really thought about what being with you means. And I should have. And I think I want to. I want to do everything and I know you’ll be gentle with me. I’m just scared about how I’m going to feel.”

“You afraid to lose control?” He’d wondered for a long time if Min could give himself over to the emotions of intimacy. The young man never wanted to relax the tight grip he had on his heart and soul. It would be a gentle, long coaxing and Se7en was committed to that. He’d been committed to that since the first day he saw Min standing on the balcony looking out over Seoul’s night skyline.

“Yeah.” Changmin sighed with relief. Se7en knew him. He didn’t know why he thought otherwise. The older man was always a little ahead of his own thoughts, anticipating how Min would feel and working to minimize his fears. Lying on his bed in the dark, the young singer wondered why he ever doubted Se7en’s motives.

Because he makes you ache in places that you didn’t think you had, whispered a thin metallic voice.

Oh good, Min nodded pleasantly. I’m crazy again. Hello, missed you. Nice for you to come back to kick my ass.

“You okay, Minku?” Se7en asked. “You sounded a little bit out of it. Do you need to crash?”

“No,” He laughed, wondering if he’d ever told his friend about the slithering whispers in his mind. “I’m okay. I just needed to think for a bit.”

“Yeah, you reconsidering that nurse’s outfit? Cause I’m sure I could get one made for you.” Another purr, illicit and full of wicked promises. “God, on second thought, maybe thigh high white stockings for those long legs of yours. Damn, I could pull those off with my teeth. It would take me days.”

“I don’t think I could last days.” Se7en rethought the stockings. “Nope, no stocking. But god those would be hot.”

“I am not a girl.” Min reminded him.

“Honey, can you tell me my little fantasy is any worse than some of the crap that your stylist makes you wear?” He asked. “I don’t make you braid your hair until your eyes wrap around to the back of your head. I think white silk stockings are the least of your worries.”

## Tarnished Angels

“Okay, I’ll give you the braids. But cross-dressing is out.” The young man said reproachfully.

“How about the shorts?” Se7en teased. “Cause those still... damn. Yeah. Anything to show off those legs.”

“Can we stop talking about my legs?” Min complained, shoving a pillow over his face. The blush in his cheeks now raged into a full blooming fire, sending a heat into his bones.

“I can talk about what’s between them.” Purring deeper, he said, pursing his mouth at the thought of Min’s body and its sweet taste. “I could talk about that all night.”

“You’re crazy. I’m going to hang up on you.” Changmin whispered.

“You still holding your phone?”

“Yeah. Why?”

“Change to the headset.” Se7en said. “I want to talk to you with your hands free.”

“No, I should sleep.” Min listened to the silence on the other end. “God, I hate that you know me. Hold on.”

He fumbled for the cords to his phone, digging around on his nightstand until he found the earpiece. Fitting it on, Min sighed and tucked the phone to the side, out of the way of his body in case he fell asleep. The last time he’d fallen asleep on Se7en, the other man hung up and called back repeatedly until the singing echo of Min’s ringtone drove down into his dreams and he was stuck with the song in his head for three days.

“There.” Changmin grumbled. “Better?”

“You tell me if it’s better.” Se7en said. “What are you wearing? And if you really loved me, you’d tell me nothing.”

“Suppose I am wearing something?”

“Then if you really loved me, you’d make sure you were nothing when you answered.” Another notch of heat worked into Se7en’s voice. “You wouldn’t want to lie to me, would you?”

Did he want to do this? Min asked himself that question as his fingers played with the drawstring of his pajamas. The cotton pants already felt too warm against his body, and the linens on his back were cool to the touch despite laying on them. But he thought he knew what Se7en was daring Min to do.

Did he really want that?

## Tarnished Angels

Oh shut up and do it already, muttered the darkness in his mind. You have got to be the densest idiot there is in the world. Have you seen Se7en? Who the hell in his right mind wouldn't want him?

Jaejoong. Min sniffed back at himself. Jae doesn't want him.

Idiot; he told himself. Se7en doesn't want Joongie-ah. He wants you. It's not Jaejoong that he's calling in the middle of the night. Even the little fantasy he had about nurses, however sick that was, didn't include Jaejoong. It was about you. He wanted you in that. Just like he wanted you in his jacket, wearing nothing but the leather and his scent.

His hands worked slowly, undoing the small bow tied beneath his belly and loosened his waistband. Hooking his thumbs into the light elastic ribbing that held the sides to his hips, Min slowly worked his pajama pants down, snagging the band to his briefs with them. They rode the length of his rear, feeling like Se7en's hand that night in the limo.

"Are those short little pants I hear you making for me?" Se7en asked, jolting Min from his memories.

"This is insane. You and I are fighting." Min stilled his hands, his clothes just at the dusting of hair above his groin.

"Sometimes fighting is the best time to make love, Minku." Sex overflowed from Se7en's rumbling voice, the thrum of his arousal just below his words. "Take them off the rest of the way and just let me imagine how you look under the sheets."

The cotton pants slithered to the floor, his briefs bunched into the tangled cloth. Stretching beneath the linens, Min reveled in the velvety feel of the satiny weave. They'd spared no expense on their sheets, Jaejoong's fondness for the finer things in life spreading into the members' bedrooms. He'd scoffed at the luxury but now, with the sultry moan of his lover's voice in his ear, Min couldn't remember why he'd given any argument against the hedonistic bedding.

"You going to lie to me and tell me you're naked, baby?" Se7en asked.

"I'm not lying." Min cleared his throat, trying to regain some measure of control. The linens rubbed against the sensitive tip of his sex, a drop of moisture already weeping free of its pout.

"Stroke with just the tips of your fingers. Imagine it's me. Remember how I touched you. And remember how much your little soft cries made me want you even more." He whispered into the phone, drawing the palm of his hand down over his bare belly and past his navel. Se7en let a small moan go when he heard Min's drawn-in breath hitch then break. "Just a little bit. Remind me of how stupid I am for being away from you for two weeks."

## Tarnished Angels

He didn't have to imagine how sexy Changmin looked against the gold of his sheets, a paler tanned lean body stretched out for his pleasure. If he had his way, he'd display Min on a dark purple, hoping to leave bite and suckle marks that would match the passionate colour.

Actually, if he had his way, Se7en thought, Min wouldn't ever leave those sheets.

Swallowing hard, Se7en whispered into the line, sighing when his body tightened under the tension he was giving it. "God I wish I was there to see you."

"I'm so...Mitsu, I don't know if I can hold it." Changmin wanted to burst, the skin under his hand tight and throbbing just at the slightest touch and the smooth hush of Se7en's words. "God, it's like I'm...I can't believe you can do this to me so quickly."

"So let go, Minku." He urged. "Just let go. You don't have to hold yourself in for me. There's nothing more beautiful than seeing you like this and I can't, I can only listen to you and wonder how sweet your face is. I want to kiss you when you lose yourself in the feelings running over you."

"It should be like a river of lightning working up from the centre of your body and then up to your chest." Se7en listened to the harsh panting moans of his lover. Then a sighing and a shuddering cry, broken shards of words Min murmured into the phone.

"I've missed you." Min let the tears fall, long sobbing jags released under the rush of his body's release. "And I hate you for making me worry and even more for making me wait. I wanted to hate you so much."

"You can swear you know." Se7en teased his lover. "Just once, it's just the two of us. You can do it."

"I really fucking hated you." Changmin breathed out in relief, feeling the knot he carried in his stomach since Se7en told him to leave untie his guts. "You are a fucking son of a bitch for doing that to me."

"Yeah, I am."

"Fuck." Min tasted the word again, liking its sharpness and cutting edge. "Okay, I'm better. I'm still mad at you."

"I'm still mad at you." Se7en replied softly. "But that's what we have to work on. If you want to."

"Yeah, I want to."

"Good," Twisting to look at the clock, Se7en winced at the time, wondering what the other man's day held for him. "I don't want to keep you up too late."



## Tarnished Angels

“You’ve been keeping me up late for the last two weeks. Tonight’s not going to make much of a difference.” Grabbing his pajama bottoms, Min wiped at the mess he’d made on his stomach after separating out his briefs from the pile.

“Am I your friend? Do you trust me?”

The question hit Min hard, out of the blue and unexpected. Stuttering, he struggled to find the answer he wanted to give, the lethargy of his release numbing his mind.

Images of Se7en’s strong face came to his mind, a sensual mouth set above a strong stubborn jaw line. That mouth was made for sin and for teaching sin. Changmin knew it. Hell, millions of people knew it and there was Se7en on the other side of the phone line offering to give Min another chance to see the heaven that the older man could offer him.

He wanted the taste of that mouth on his. He missed it, damn it. And he wanted it again.

More importantly, he wanted the man who he could share his mind with. The sharp-tongued witty tease who could coax a shy murmur or blush just with a twist of a word or make a joke as bad as Junsu’s funny. Min missed the laughter Se7en gave him. And he missed the flush of his soul when the other man was near.

Something shifted into place inside of Min and a kernel of want buried down into the rich soil of his soul.

“Yes, I trust you.” Changmin let go, surrendering to the wave of emotions he could not hold back any longer. He wanted this man to be his lover. He wanted to see if his face fit into the hollow of Se7en’s belly and to taste the saltiness of sweat and seed on the back of his throat.

“Good.” Se7en murmured back. “I wish I could lick you clean, Minku. I do. But you and I, we need to work on this thing. Are you with me?”

“Yes.” Min agreed. “And I set the pace.”

“Good boy. Take control.” His laugh was a burst of joy to Min’s ears. “I wouldn’t imagine you’d do anything else.”

“Good night, Minku.” Se7en continued. “I’ll call you tomorrow. I need to find out what my schedule is.”

“Okay.” Min replied. “Oh, Mitsu?”

“Yeah, baby?”

“I love you.” Changmin whispered. “I love you very much.”

Se7en sat at the other end of the phone line, listening to the emptiness following Min’s confession and then the click of the phone disconnecting

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before Se7en could respond. Smiling, he undid the phone cord and shut his cell down, letting the device and the connectors slide to the floor.

Pulling the sheets over his nude body, Se7en stretched out, cradling a pillow against his side, giving him a warmth that he could imagine was Min.

“Saranghae, Minku.” Whispering into the ceiling, Se7en wished for the night to carry his words to Min’s sleeps, listening to the rain’s song before falling back into his own dreams.

## 22

Changmin did the only thing he could think of wanting to do in the middle of the rainy afternoon. He crawled into bed next to Jaejoong.

The others were all scattered on their own, Yunho off to practice a dance routine he felt he needed more work on. Junsu and Yoochun headed to a movie, which Min knew they wouldn't watch. No one went to more movies and couldn't explain what they saw like the middle members of their group. He used to wonder what they did.

Now, he knew.

Jaejoong was curled up around one pillow, a nest of three others tucked behind his back. He glanced up from the manga he was reading, silently holding up the sheet for Min to crawl under, moving the pillow and pulling the youngest up against him.

Cuddled against the singer, Min let Jaejoong's presence comfort him, sliding his bare feet between Jae's and tucking one knee between Jae's legs. They'd nestled this way before. Usually when Changmin needed reassurance or sometimes just for the feel of someone who loved him around his body.

The room smelled like the two older men, a blend of masculinity and gentle softness. Nearly picture perfect clean, the only sign of a mess were stacks of CDs on a long table, haphazard towers of music left for them to dig through. Changmin secretly loved this room more than any other in the house. It gave him a sense of strength and family every time he walked through the door. He especially loved the enormous bed set in the middle of the floor. It could hold all five of them and had, sometimes they just lay tangled into one another talking and laughing or sometimes even listening to a few of them harmonizing through a song.

This is where they were family. This room was where they all felt safe and hidden from the world.

Now, the two men lay quiet against one another, just the occasional flip of a page as Jaejoong worked through his reading, one arm around Min's waist. Changmin listened to the steady beat of Jae's heart, letting the sound lull him into a half-sleep. To Min, where Se7en smelled of anise, Jae was scented with vanilla and cloves, a hint of green tea from Yunho's cologne transferred when the leader hugged his lover goodbye.

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“Joongie-ah,” The singer had gone through one book and was halfway through another manga when Min finally spoke. “When you fell in love with Yunho, did you know immediately?”

“No. I hated him first. Because he made me feel like I was insane. I wanted him to touch me and that hurt.” Jae admitted slowly, putting the book down. “Then I loved him and he didn’t see me. Well, you know how that went.”

“I hated how that went.” Min grimaced. “It was horrible.”

“Sorry.” Jae matched Min’s sour face. “I didn’t mean to hurt you guys. I really didn’t. I just wanted to hurt Yunho. Badly.”

Changmin laughed, blurring out a horse chuckle into Jae’s chest. The loud guffaw made Jaejoong snort in return, falling into a wave of giggles that brought tears to their eyes. Sighing, Min sent a silent thank you to Scarlet for taking care of the young man they both loved so much.

“I talked to Se7en last night and he made me,” How did he tell Jaejoong about the intimate dare the other man drove him to? And how to say it in such a way that it didn’t seem dirty? “He told me to touch myself and to let him hear me.”

“So the two of you have patched things up?” Jae pressed a kiss to Min’s forehead, unsure if the young man needed to be reassured or to hear Se7en condemned.

“No,” Min grinned despite his confusion. “We’ve agreed to be mad at each other.”

“Ah, Yunho and I do that all the time.” Jae nodded knowingly. “Did you feel like it left you unclean? Do you need to know that it’s okay?”

“Yes and no.” He responded with a sigh. “I should feel like it was wrong. But I don’t. I want to be brave and daring. Se7en makes me feel like I can be those things.”

“Why do you call him Se7en?” The usage was curious to Jae. Thinking about it, he realized he called the other man Se7en as well. “I do that too. Huh.”

“You get distracted easy.” Changmin grinned. “You’re supposed to be telling me that what I did with Se7en on the phone wasn’t dirty.”

“I think you know it wasn’t.” Jae shrugged, kissing his friend on the nose. He cuddled closer, wrapping the sheets tight around them. As the rain fell outside, they were cocooned against the cold, safe and warm around one another. “You said you wanted to be daring. Maybe you just want to try out being seduced. Se7en sounds like he wants to seduce you. I don’t see why you guys are arguing about it.”

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“You hate him, remember?”

“No, Yunho hates him.” Jae corrected Min. “And I don’t even know if Yunho hates him as much as he wants to keep you safe. Se7en isn’t safe. I think that scares Yunnie-ah.”

“Yunnie-ah needs to get out of my business.” Min growled. “I’m not in his.”

“I think you were more in his when he wasn’t sure he loved me.” Jaejoong thought back. “You meddled a lot. Remember the bedroom shifting?”

“That wasn’t meddling.” He grumbled under his breath, caught out by his past actions. “That was necessary for the group. You were driving us all crazy.”

“With Se7en, Yunho thought he was doing what was necessary. I don’t agree with him but I know he meant well.” They’d spoken after Yunho come home and Jae could barely contain his anger at his lover but it softened when he saw the tears in Yunnie’s eyes when he spoke of his fear for Min’s heart.

“He loves you so much. When he left home, he had to leave his younger sister behind and you are here. I know he thinks of you like he does his sister.” Jae explained, rubbing at Min’s lower back. “He’d be as protective of her as he is you.”

“I’m not his younger sister.” Another grumble and Min could hear the childishness in his voice. “I hate being the youngest. I miss being the oldest.”

“I miss being the youngest and I hate being the oldest.” Jae stuck his tongue out.

“Meh, you’re not the oldest. You gave that to Yunho. He likes being the oldest.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I’m not the oldest. Thank God for that.” Leading the discussion back around the reason Min came in to cuddle against him. “Se7en.”

“Se7en.” Min nodded, lightly placing a clenched fist on Jae’s chest for emphasis. “Min-seven hwaiting!”

“What are you going to do? Do you know?”

“I want to be with him. I do.”

It sounded final to Jae’s ears, a firm resolution to work towards some relationship with the older man. This both scared and thrilled him. He knew

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that one day he would have to let their youngest go and fall on his own. He didn't like it. He didn't have to like it.

Well, he did like it. If Jae really looked at, he liked Se7en. Deep inside, he knew the older man loved and cherished Min in his own way. Not something he expected at all.

"Did you tell him that?" The pillows gave slightly under Jae's weight as he shifted to get a better view of Min's face.

"I took off my pants for him." The red was back. It started at the back of his jaws and worked up until it flooded Min's cheeks. "And I told him I loved him."

"Ah." Jae wasn't sure what to say. He could help Yoochun when Junsu was being stubborn about their relationship. "He wants you. You want him. What's the problem again?"

"The problem is, we don't know where it's going to."

"Does that matter?" Jae laughed when Min raised his head and looked at his friend with an unblinking stare. "What? I'm confused about what you're worrying about."

"I don't think I'm willing to..." Changmin stopped himself. "Jaejoong, I don't know what the hell I'm worrying about. I think he scares me."

"Has he hurt you?" There was a small thread of alarm in Jae's mind, dismissed by the emphatic shake of Min's head.

"Not like that. No." Min said calmly. "I've never just fallen into something before. I mean, this is frightening because he's told me that I decide how fast or how slow we move and then I feel like it's a lot of pressure."

"You're pressured because you have control?" Jae pursed his mouth, thinking about what Min said.

"Yes." Changmin sighed, his breath hot with stress.

"So maybe that's what you have to do." The older man shrugged, resting his forehead against Min's. "Maybe you should just tell Se7en that he should be the one to lead both of you."

"So give it totally over to him?" Min whistled under his breath. "Are you nuts? You know me. Have you ever known me to give up control?"

"That's probably what you need to do." Jaejoong suggested. "Do you trust him?"

"He asked me that." Remembering the phone call, he shivered at the ghosts of emotions running down his legs. "I told him yes."

"Did you mean it?"

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“Yeah, I do.” Min nodded. “I trust Se7en. Even now when we’re pissed off at each other, I know he’s there for me. He is my closest friend. You all are family, you know that. But Se7en is someone that fits right inside of me. It’s like there’s are pieces of me that’s missing and he’s got them.”

“Shouldn’t I know what I want from him? What about if we are lovers or soul mates or what?” Rolling over onto his back, Min shifted closer to Jae to stay in other man’s loose embrace.

“Why?” Jaejoong asked. “Why put a name on what you have? As long as you have it, does it need a label as long as both of you are happy?”

“Minnie-ah, it doesn’t matter who you love,” The older man said before kissing Min on the cheek, stroking at the singer’s soft hair. “It also doesn’t matter how you love. So long as you do.”



“Here. Maybe you’ll get drunk and fall off the balcony.” Se7en handed Yunho a cold bottle of beer. “Although this really is only your second. But then you’re probably that much of a pussy you can’t handle two beers.”

“Thanks. Why don’t you get drunk so I can push you off first?” Yunho gave the other man a tight smile, undoing the cap and laying it on the coffee table. “And I’ll be fine. I’m taking a cab home.”

“Kim won’t be pissed that you’ve been gone for a couple of hours?”

“I told him I was going to practice, which I did.” Yunho pointed out. “I just didn’t tell him I was going to cut it short and then come over here. I’ll tell him when I get home.”

He sat at one corner of the couch in Se7en’s sitting area, his back to the wide expanse of windows showcasing the apartment’s view. Yunho felt a small twinge of guilt at the small grey lie he told his lover but he didn’t know what Jaejoong’s reaction would have been if he found out Se7en invited Yunho to talk.

Of course, talk didn’t seem to be something that either one of them had any skill at. Not when poking at each other’s ego was much more fun.

“Nice place. Bigger than what we’ve got.” Yunho glanced behind him, looking over his shoulder at the wall of electronics. If he planned things right, they could really toss Se7en off the balcony and move in.

“Don’t get too comfortable.” The other man warned him as if reading the singer’s thoughts. “There’s only two bedrooms. The office isn’t big enough for someone to sleep in.”

“That’s because you didn’t see the room Min took over in our park apartment.” Yunho sipped at his beer, savouring the yeasty flavour on his

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tongue. He rarely drank in public, abstaining for the most part except for a few private parties and at home. “He likes living in a closet.”

“If Min ever lives here, I’m not sticking him in a closet.” Se7en stretched his legs out, resting his heels on the coffee table. “Just because you’re comfortable there, doesn’t mean Minku should live there too.”

“That’s Jae’s decision. Not mine.” The leader moved his legs up, his bare feet resting on the couch cushions. “And did you want me to punch you again? Because you didn’t have to bribe me with a beer for that. I’d do it for free. Hell, I’ve got a few yen. I’ll pay you.”

“Didn’t you come over to apologize?”

“No, Choi,” Yunho shook his head. “That was yesterday. Today you invited me.”

“Damn,” The other sighed and leaned his head onto the couch back. “It would be rude then for me to throw you out.”

“Pretty much.” He shrugged at Se7en then smiled. “Of course you’re an asshole so no one would expect you to have manners.”

“And you kiss your boyfriend with a mouth that dirty?”

“My boyfriend likes my mouth this dirty.” Yunho met Se7en’s small grin with a saluting lift of his bottle. “Why did you invite me over?”

“Because the two of us are important to Changmin. Neither one of us is going to go anywhere.” The singer swallowed the sip he took. Yunho’s presence in the apartment wasn’t disturbing as much as it seemed illicit. He would have to tell Changmin that he’d invited the leader over. Se7en didn’t want secrets between them. “So, here you are. Why did you come over?”

“Same reason.” Putting the bottle down on the coffee table, he leaned forward over his crossed legs, intent on Se7en’s face. “Joongie said I should try to understand where your heart is. He thinks you love Min a lot. I listen to Jae’s advice. He’s a scatter-brain but you’d be surprised at how much he knows.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised at all.” Se7en grinned. “Your Jaejoong is wise beyond his years. And bites back if you stick your finger into his face. I made that mistake when he came over here to fix my hand.”

“He told me you were well-behaved.” Yunho’s eyes narrowed. “Do I have to take back my promise to him about not punching you in the face again.”

“I didn’t do anything to him. I was drunk and pissed off. He told me to fuck off and to shut up.” He replied, laughing at Yunho’s protectiveness. “You really do take this whole father-leader thing very seriously.”



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“Yeah, I do.” The answer was soft, laden with weights attached by love for the others. “A lot of times all we have are the five of us. Some of the others have had hard times of it. I’m not going to let the world hurt them again if I can help it. And neither am I going to let the ones who’ve had easier lives find out how much they can hurt.”

“Changmin said you were bossy. But he also said you depend on him.”

“I do.” Yunho grinned. “He keeps me from molesting Jaejoong in public. Always a good thing.”

“I just think that we need to think about how we’re affecting him. I don’t want him hurt because we can’t get along.” Se7en pointed out. “And I don’t think it’s impossible for us to get along.”

“For Minnie-ah’s sake, I think we can do that.” Yunho nodded in agreement. “But you do know that I have to promise to kick your ass if you hurt him.”

“Understood.” Se7en agreed. “So long as you understand that I’m not like Rain.”

“Ah, so you know about that ass. How did you find out?”

“Some things Min told me. Some I overheard and then I had someone asking around.”

“Now that makes sense. Bi called Jaejoong to why someone was poking around a dead scandal.” Yunho grabbed his beer and took another sip. He hated warm beer and the brown glass didn’t seem to do well outside of the ice box. “He was worried.”

“I found out that you had him beaten up.”

“Oh no, that wasn’t me. I only hit him a couple of times. Someone else beat him up. Probably someone he pissed off.” Yunho stepped away from the subject, not wanting to tie Scarlet into the creation of Rain’s injuries. “You know him. Do you think Dong Bang were the only ones he got mad?”

“Probably not.” Se7en agreed. “But I’m not like him. I’m not in this to manipulate and use Min. If you don’t get that, then we’re going to have problems.”

“No, I understand.” Yunho replied. “It is...”

They both turned at the sound of the door being opened. Se7en stood to look over the kitchen counters and canted his head in surprise at Changmin’s entrance. The younger man had a nervous smile on his face, shifting the strap of his backpack from one shoulder to the other.

“Hi.” Min set the pack down, putting the key to the apartment into a side pocket. “Yunho!”

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“I’m just leaving.” Yunho took a final sip and then jostled past Se7en. “Don’t fuck this up.”

“Nice.” Min narrowed his gaze at his leader. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m leaving.” The older man pushed at Changmin’s shoulder. “He and I had something to work out.”

“Our relationship isn’t any of your business.” Min started to heat, a steam rising from his core.

“And you know what, my relationship with Se7en isn’t any of yours.” Yunho smiled sweetly. “I’ll see you later, Dong-Wook.”

“Tell the wife I said hello.” Se7en called out after Yunho.

“Heh, I’ll tell him you called him that.” The leader replied before closing the door behind him.

Changmin stared at the closed door for a long second, unsure if he should go chase down Yunho to punch him. A hand on his shoulder stopped those thoughts and replaced them with more sultry options.

“Turn around, Minku.”

Those hands would be Min’s undoing. Their touch was velvet as fingers skimmed over his cheeks. Se7en gently turned him until they stood nearly against one another, the older man’s dark eyes drinking in Min’s face.

“God, it’s been too long since I’ve done this.” Se7en cupped the back of Min’s head, cradling the rounded crest of his skull and lowered his mouth. Their lips met, just a brief whisper of a touch that crackled through Min’s face, setting his breath on fire and he was forced to open his mouth in order to breathe in more of Se7en’s taste.

The other man took the invitation and pressed harder, nearly bruising Min’s lower lip with the nip of his teeth then gentling his caress into small suckling butterfly touches, taking his time to roam over the younger man’s mouth. Se7en wanted to taste every inch of the young man’s seductive sensuality, still so innocent and untouched. There was a purity in Min’s mouth that Se7en would never tire of.

This was beyond sex, Se7en thought. This was like God poured a spring rain into his lover’s mouth for him to quench his thirst on. Taking a moment to stare at Min’s beauty, Se7en realized he was really quite thirsty.

Changmin’s hands were on Se7en’s waist, drifting there without him having to think about where to touch the other man. It just seemed natural to touch Se7en, to hold him close and urge the other man to take whatever he could from Min’s mouth.

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They shared another kiss, harder and more frantic than the next, needing to swallow the time they'd spent away from one another. Min's mouth throbbed nearly as much as the heat between his legs and the tingle of want along his spine. His body was telling him what he needed, what he wanted but Min had no way of knowing what would extinguish the burning fire in his nerves.

He wasn't so certain that even after Se7en was done with him that the flames would be gone. That was fine with him. He could accept having Se7en to douse the hunger in his body for as long as the other wanted to.

Gasping, Min pulled away first, his eyes nearly black with desire. No longer able to think clearly, he knew he needed to talk to Se7en. Regardless of where his heart and body were heading, his mind had to reassert its hold on the situation. At least for a few minutes.

"I thought I told you not to use that key until I told you it was okay." Se7en's smile was sardonic and teasing.

"You told me to take control. So I did." Min replied.

"True." Se7en agreed slowly. "I guess you're right on that."

"And I needed to talk to you." Min took a breath. "I want two things."

"Okay, shoot." His arms still around Min's waist, Se7en rocked the other man gently. They'd not agreed to set aside their anger and now, cuddled against one another, the underlying burn gave their passion spice.

"One, I want you to take some of this control. I need you to guide us more." Changmin nodded at Se7en's raised eyebrows. "I can't decide where we're going because I really don't know where it should go. I need to depend on you for that."

"If you don't like where I take you then you tell me to stop, yes?" He asked. Then murmured when Min nodded in agreement. "Okay, I can deal with that. And the second?"

"The second is," Min took a deep breath. "I need you to make love to me. Maybe not tonight but at some point, I need you to show me how much you love me. And I can show you how much I love you."

"Someone told me that I am wasting too much of my time and energy on deciding what to call you in my life. That it doesn't matter what we are. And what I do know is that I want you. And I need you." Releasing a huff of air, Changmin continued. "I want you to be my lover, Se7en. My lover and friend. Can you be that for me?"

# 23

“Baby,” Se7en pursed his mouth and released his breath in a slow steady stream. Holding Min’s long, warm body against him was torture. Plain torture.

Letting go of the young man would be sheer suicide.

“You sure about this?” He asked, watching Min’s face. Innocence still reigned there, a sweetness he wasn’t sure Changmin would ever lose. It was one of the many erotic, beautiful qualities that caught Se7en’s interest and he never wanted to see it extinguished.

“Yep. I’m sure.” Min nodded curtly, an emphatic gesture coupled with a smile that broke Se7en’s will to pieces. “You asked if I trusted you. I am saying, I trust you. And I know that if you hear me say that I’m scared, you’ll stop. I don’t have any doubts about that.”

“Good.” He smiled, kissing at the corners of Changmin’s mouth.

“What do we do first?”

“First?” Se7en cocked his head to the side. “We’re going to start our night off from the beginning. This time, no cooking for you. I’ll order some take-in and we can spend part of the evening together.”

“Eh?” Changmin’s confused look made the other man laugh. “Aish, didn’t we just make up?”

“Did you think I was just going to toss you onto the bed and have you? Do you think you’re ready for my fingers inside of you? My mouth on you?” Another look on Min’s face, blanched and terrified made Se7en hold him tighter. “See? You’re not ready for that, baby.”

“Sorry. I just didn’t expect you to say those things.” His mind steered away from the shock of Se7en’s words then the wondering of how everything the other man suggested would feel. “Is it nice? I mean, does it feel nice?”

“Let’s order some food for dinner and just sit down to talk.” Se7en kissed his lover’s forehead. “There’s a bunch of menus on the refrigerator door. See what you like and I’ll call it in. “

“Should I go home and get some clothes?” Min asked over his shoulder, taking the flyers down from the magnet clip that held them.

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“No,” He swallowed, seeing the light shine through the thinness of Min’s shirt. The outline of the younger man’s body made him want Min even more, veiled behind a sheer layer of fabric. There was strength and grace beneath the loose cloth. Se7en wanted very much to touch the stretch of skin along Min’s belly and bite between the younger man’s shoulder blades.

“If you don’t go home tonight, I can’t promise you that I’ll have self-control. Besides, we’re going to start over. We can look at our schedules and find a time that we can have a nice dinner or maybe even just spend the afternoon together.”

“So no touching at all tonight?” Min looked up, his long dark hair nearly hiding his smiling eyes.

“I didn’t say that.” Se7en rounded the kitchen counter, leaning over to capture Min’s mouth with a searing kiss. “I said I didn’t have self-control, not that I was stupid.”



They decided on pho, choosing carefully from a list of fresh ingredients for the delivery. Se7en quibbled with Min over the meat choices but remained firm about the vegetables. Changmin frowned, wrinkling his nose at the mention of ngo gai.

“It tastes like soap.” He complained, scraping his tongue against his teeth to mock Se7en’s choice.

“You don’t have to put any in yours. It doesn’t come with the ngo gai in it.” He bared his clenched teeth playfully at the younger man, shaking his head at the frustrated, dramatic sigh Min gave him. The eye roll that followed nearly gave Se7en a laughing fit. “Does any of that work on the other members?”

“They give me anything I want.” Changmin shrugged. “I’m the baby.”

“Ah, so you’re the baby when it’s to your advantage then.” He asked.

“I’m not an idiot.” Se7en was rewarded with a withering look from Min that doubted his intelligence. “Always use anything to your advantage.”

“Jaejoongie teach you that?”

“No, Junsu.” Min tapped the menu laying on the counter. “I want shrimp.”

“And you shall have shrimp, my little dictator.” Se7en picked up the house phone, dialing the restaurant. “Do me a favour! Can you drag my duffel bag out of my room? I need to throw some of the clothes in there into the laundry.”

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“Yep.” Min walked to the bedroom, turning around halfway to shout at Se7en. “No ngo gai for me!”

“I’ll eat yours.” The older man muttered. “I like it. You have no taste in food.”

Changmin dismissed Se7en’s mumbling with a backward wave of his hand. He hovered at the threshold of the bedroom, staring at the wide bed that Se7en left unmade. The tangle of sheets and rumped pillows were a sensual reminder of the night he’d fallen asleep in the other man’s arms, a poignant memory he’d not revisited because it hurt too damned much. Now, the warm feel of Se7en’s body on his was a soft brush of desire he cherished.

Lifting up a corner of the linens, Min sniffed lightly at first then bunched the sheets in his hands, burying his face into the anise-scented cloth. He held Se7en’s fragrance in his lungs, reluctantly exhaling when his chest began to ache. Sitting on the edge of the bed, Min slid the sheets around his shoulders, wanting to have Se7en’s scent on him before he went back into the main room.

The duffel bag had been thrown into a corner, a long canvas sack nearly bulging at the seams. Letting the sheets slither off, Min grabbed at its strap, pulling it onto the bed and unzipped it, going to pull out the clothes for Se7en to launder.

He stopped when his fingers closed over a picture frame that held a photo of their faces.

It had been taken the day of the signing. Centred on Min’s profile, the picture captured the longing in his features as he looked down at nearly out of focus Se7en, the other man’s face turned up to gaze into Min’s eyes. The image captured everything in that moment they’d shared, the tentative trust building between them and the secrets they both already shared. He’d not seen himself so vulnerable and open before.

He knew that honest and sincere look on Se7en’s face. It had been there the whole time.

“It should be here in half an hour.” The older man said, coming into the room. “Did you find my duffel?”

“Yes.” Changmin held the frame between his palms, tilting it sideways to show Se7en. “I also found this.”

“Ah,” Se7en looked bashful, rubbing at the back of his neck. “Um, yeah.”

“Why are you out of focus?” Min stared down at the photo. “Why did you keep this? You were mad at me.”

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“Well,” Se7en joined Min on the bed, crossing his legs underneath him. “I was mad at you but I still love you. I wanted to have something with me in the hotels. And Taebin teased the shit out of me when he saw it.”

“So he knows about me?”

“Oh, yeah.” He nodded. “He approves of you. He said that a younger man is just what I needed to remind myself that I’m human.”

“Oh?” Min lifted his eyebrows. “What did he mean by that?”

“Tae seems to think that I don’t relax enough. And that you’ll be good for me.” Leaning on one elbow, Se7en stroked at Min’s thigh, letting his fingers run up the other man’s inseam. “Of course he doesn’t know how serious you are most of the time but I like making you smile. Cracking that shell of yours is a lot of fun.”

“You cheat.” Min gasped when the tips of Se7en’s fingers brushed at the juncture of his legs. “Aish, don’t do that and then plan on walking away. That’s not fair.”

“Life isn’t fair, Minku.” Se7en leaned up, kissing Min’s mouth before grabbing the clothes out of his bag. “I’m going to toss this in the washer. If the guy comes while I’m in the laundry room, just sign my name to the tab. They’ll charge it to my account in the building.”

“Shichi?” Changmin called out to the other man before Se7en left the room.

“What, baby?” He’d stopped to toss a few toiletries onto the dresser, the rattle of a deodorant stick a sharp clatter on the black lacquer dressing table.

“Why did you sign your letter as Se7en?” Min lay back onto the bed, staring up at his lover.

An uncharacteristic troubled look flittered momentarily over the other man’s face. He cocked his head as if to answer then stopped, shrugging after a few seconds. Pursing his lips in contemplation, Se7en replied in a soft hushed voice.

“I think that’s because that’s all there is of me.” His shoulders lifted again, just the hint of resignation in the motion. “I think of myself as Se7en now. Dong-Wook seems like a whole different person, one that I used to know a long time ago. Now, there’s only Se7en, really.”

“Do you miss him? Dong-Wook?”

“Sometimes.” He admitted with a rueful nod. “I think he would be more of a friend to you than I am. He was.. much more of a dreamer than I am.”

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“But you are Dong-Wook.” Min reminded him, reaching over to touch at Se7en’s waist.

“No, baby.” He bent to kiss Min’s mouth, finding the sweetness of the other’s tongue before grabbing his laundry. “I forgot how to dream a long time ago. All I have left now is ambition.”



Changmin held his mouth open to take a bit of braised tendon from Se7en’s bowl. Chewing on the viscous meat, he took his time tasting the flavours of the broth and herbs, trying to decide if he liked the other’s pho combination.

“See? It’s good.” Se7en said, drawing the chopsticks away.

“I think I like the shrimp and prime rib better.” Min chewed still, unsure about the gumminess of the meat. “It’s got a good taste but I don’t know about the texture. It’s too soft.”

“Well that’s not something that I ever hope to hear from your mouth about me.” Se7en teased, leaning over to pound on Min’s back when the younger man choked.

“Don’t do that when I’m eating.” Coughing, Min reached for his water, swallowing a mouthful to wash the chunk of meat down. “I don’t want to die eating. It’s bad enough the fans have me married to food. I hate having the reputation of eating the most in the group. There are hardly any pictures of me eating but there it is; Min and food.”

“You like food. There’s nothing wrong with that.” Se7en shrugged, rubbing between Min’s shoulder blades. “Hell, I like food.”

“Yeah but I come out sounding like some sort of pig. I can’t help it if I was growing when we first started. I eat less now.” Min thought about it. “Okay maybe not less but slower.”

“You are very active.” Se7en pointed out. “And you eat about as much as I do. Don’t worry about it. Of course if it really bothers you, we can start doing fan service out in public. I’m sure that will take care of any Min/Food pairing that might crop up.”

“I’d kill you.” Changmin threatened him with chopsticks. “I don’t want the kind of scrutiny that the others have. Or I’ll tell Yunho to kill you. That would make him happy.”

“You can’t hide behind your leader forever.” He laughed. “Besides, you’re taller than he is. You can’t hide behind him at all.”



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"I hate you sometimes." Min wrinkled his nose. "Is that supposed to be a joke? It's a bad joke. You and Junsu should enter some sort of program to stop your joke addictions."

"Ah, you're cruel." Se7en clutched at his chest, pretending to fall over in pain. Nearly upending his pho, he grabbed at the bowl before it turned over, catching it before it made a mess.

"You have very quick hands." The young man observed with a smile.

"They're going to be very slow on you."

It was the casualness of Se7en's remarks that made Min's heart stutter. This one was no exception. Unable to control his embarrassment, Changmin ducked his head down.

"Don't hide from me." Cupping Min's chin, he pulled the young man's head up until he could see his eyes. "Don't ever hide from me, baby."

"You make me feel," Changmin swallowed. Looking for a word, he chose one that seemed to have everything he felt wrapped up into it. "Hot."

"Yeah, that's the way I want to make you feel." He set the pho aside, half-eaten and fully forgotten.

Gently taking the bowl from Min's hands, Se7en moved it onto the table, wrapping his hands around the younger man's waist and pulling him in close. They kissed, a tentative gentle touch of their lips, exploring the taste of one another after a long absence. Min laughed, a husky murmur of humour against Se7en's kiss and he pulled back, curious about Min's giggle.

"I think I'm beginning to like the taste of ngo gai." He covered his mouth, licking at his bottom lip where Se7en's kiss left a drop of moisture. "I can taste it on you."

"There are a lot of things I'd like to feed you that way." The singer cocked his head, kissing at Min's long neck. "But before I get too carried away, I probably should take a breath and let you finish your dinner."

"Dinner." Min glanced at the pho and then back at the man he was nearly straddling. "What makes you think I want dinner now?"

Shifting the young man's legs around his hips, Se7en leaned back against the arm of the couch, placing a hand on the small of Min's back to guide him down to him. Sucking the other's pout into his mouth, he laved at Min's lip, catching it against his teeth with a light burnish. There was untouched sin still there. There probably always would be, Se7en thought. No matter how much he delved into Min's body and soul, there would always be a wondrous untouchable vein of angel inside of the somber scholar. Se7en nearly forgot how much he missed that.

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And he vowed he wouldn't forget it again.

Stroking at Min's lower back, he roamed over the dip of the other's spine, pulling Min's shirt away from his body so he had better access to the long stretches of skin he knew lay beneath. There was a temptation to wander downwards, and he took it, just skimming the top of Min's rear with the brush of his fingers. He ached to cup the roundness he knew he would find under the other man's jeans. His palms ached for that ever since he'd touched Min in the back of the limo. His mouth watered at the thought of Min laying on his tongue.

Se7en figured his body knew all of the places that he wanted to explore. His mind told him that he had to wait. Sometimes, he sighed, it was a bitch listening to the rational part of his mind when the primal urges of his body had much better ideas.

"Okay. I need to stop for a minute." Se7en gasped, pulling in long iced breaths of air. He held Min on him, the other shifting against the lengthening hardness between Se7en's legs. "Keep doing that baby and you're going to be very sorry. Or very happy. It depends on how long I could hold out."

"I just wanted to get more comfortable." Min noisily kissed Se7en's chin. "So, talking then?"

"Talking would be good." He nodded. "Fucking would be better but talking is nice. I can talk."

"You have the filthiest mouth."

"Have you heard your leader?" Se7en scoffed. "He outdoes me any day of the week."

"So can Jaejoong." Min thought about it. "But you're bad. I don't mind. I like your mouth."

"I like your mouth too." He murmured after Changmin left a lingering kiss over his lips. "Okay, talk. What do you want to talk about?"

"Sex." Min protested with a groan at Se7en's rolling eyes. "I know the mechanics. I want to know how it feels."

"It's nice." Se7en winced under the slight pain of Min's punch. "You like to hit. I'm going to have to tie you to the bed sometime just to keep you under control."

The thought of being bound to Se7en's bed made Min shiver, the shudder bringing a grin to Se7en's mouth.

"We can try that, you know." He kissed Changmin's collarbone. "It would mean a lot of trust, Minku. From both of us. But that should come later. When you're ready for me."

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“You make me think of some very bad things.”

“Not bad,” He corrected. “Just.. unconventional. And baby, trust me, there are ways I want to make you feel that should be illegal. And probably are in some places in the world. But they aren’t bad things. And if you don’t feel comfortable, I will always stop.”

“Does it hurt? Sex?” Resting his chin on Se7en’s chest, Min waited for the older man to answer. “I read about it. When we first started talking about it, I looked a lot of it up on the internet. There seems to be a lot of information but no one can really tell me what to feel.”

“I’ve never researched how to make love.” He admitted, thinking about it.

“Well, how did you learn then?”

“Um, baby, you know I’m not a virgin, right?” Se7en asked, his hands roaming down to the backs of Min’s thighs. “I’ve had sex before. A lot of it.”

“I know.” Min made a face. “I just... God you always make me feel like a little kid. I mean, how did you learn how to do it.”

“Time.” He responded. “Practice.”

“So you’re a slut?” Changmin giggled at Se7en’s pinch on his butt.

“Probably.” Se7en admitted. “When I was younger, I didn’t care who I slept with. I was always careful but sex was just something physical that I wanted. Then it became kind of empty and I wanted more than just to stick my dick into some place wet.”

“That sounds kind of sad.” He sighed, thinking of the nights Se7en spent trying to feel a part of someone but too detached emotionally to get any further than physical satiation.

“Took me a while.” The man nodded. “But I eventually figured it out. So I stopped looking for just what caught my eye and started looking for people that I liked. And some I even loved. You’re one of those loved ones, in case you were wondering.”

“I wasn’t.” Min sniffed, secretly pleased. “Is Taebin?”

“Tae?” He laughed. “We’re more like your Joongie and his Yoochun. Although yeah, we’ve experimented a few times. Mostly we end up laughing to hard or making noises on each other’s bodies. It takes very little for us to start losing it. I think we’re were too much of good friends to become lovers.”

“Did you... with Tae while you were in Hong Kong?” There was a flare of jealousy in Min’s voice, surprising him. Se7en shook his head, not seeing the fire glint in his lover’s eyes. “Nope, baby. I said you and only you, remember? I keep my promises.”

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“So, is it nice? I mean, does it make you feel really good?” He whispered into Se7en’s chest, unsure about the wave of sensations he was having to deal with when he heard the older man talk about something so intimate.

“How about..” Se7en slid his hand down the back of Min’s jeans, running his finger down the crevice of the young man’s briefs. “If I take a little time and just show you a little bit of pleasure before you go home? Because baby, if I don’t send you home tonight, I’m going to regret rushing and that’s not what I want to do with you.”

“I want to take a very long time exploring every inch of your beautiful body.” He whispered against Min’s parted mouth. “Let me just take a small little taste now and I’ll give you something to dream about when you get home.”

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Changmin gasped at the liquid fire running up and down his back. Se7en's fingers were making slow circles under his waistband, the denim stretched tight against his belly. The older man nipped at Min's earlobe, whispering softly.

"Unbutton your jeans. Just the top. Don't zip them down."

Changmin fumbled to reach his waist, his fingers cold despite the heat coursing through his body. Finding the metal button, he pulled it free from its prison. His body ached, his stomach clenching reflexively when Se7en licked at his jaw, trailing down the younger man's neck and biting lightly over Min's jugular.

"Just lift up a bit, baby. I need to just a little space." He pulled his hand up, gaping Min's jeans. "There we are, Minku. Just lay against me. And give me your mouth."

Changmin offered Se7en a kiss, holding his face a few centimeters away. He rubbed his lips on the older man's mouth, creating an electric friction between them. His tongue darted out, tasting lightly at his lover's mouth. He took a longer lick, running over the ridge of Se7en's upper lip. Exploring the length of the man's mouth, Min laved at the upward sweep at the corners.

Se7en remained still beneath his lover's explorations, parting his mouth when Min pressed in for a deeper drink.

Laying under Min's legs and chest, Se7en shifted until his head rested against the arm of the couch, giving his lover easier access to his mouth. When Changmin's kisses moved to his throat, he moaned lightly, sliding his hand down and under the other man's briefs. There was a jolt along Min's body when Se7en touched the rise of his cleft, the brush of his index finger startling him and his rear clenched, trapping the tip between his pressed-in globes.

"Shichi." Changmin heard himself purr, a deep thrumming sound in his throat. "You're making me crazy."

"Good, we can be insane together." Se7en removed his hand, ignoring Min's whimper and sucked on his fingers, sliding them back into place. "I don't want to hurt you baby. And before I do this, I need to make sure you're okay."

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“I’m fine.” Min stammered, trying to keep his mind clear. Leaning forward, he felt open and vulnerable to Se7en’s fingers. Spread apart, he tried to move, held still by the press of Se7en’s other hand at the small of his back.

“Stay there. I need you there, baby.” Se7en raked his teeth over Min’s throat, working at the loose collar of his t-shirt until he exposed the length of collarbone he was look for. Closing his mouth over the spray of beauty marks just below the bone’s ridge, Se7en rolled a bite of skin between his teeth, sucking hard at the flesh until he felt it well underneath his tongue.

“Mitsu.” Min’s voice was broken now, struggling to maintain some level of control under Se7en’s caresses. “Please...”

“Please what, Minku?” He brushed down again between the cleft, his wet fingers stroking at the entrance of Min’s body, just at the rim hidden deep inside. Min’s body convulsed at the touch, at once rejecting Se7en’s probing then pouting slightly, opening just a little bit in surrender.

Gripping Se7en’s shirt, Min buried his face into his lover’s hands, unsure of what he needed to say to make Se7en either go forward or stop. The maddening circle of the other’s fingers were drawing him in and the twisting of his stomach hurt in a delicious ache. A rush of blood filled his sex, tight and firm along the seam of his jeans, trapped against Se7en’s body.

Tipping his hips forward, Min whimpered when his clothes rubbed against his shaft, a coarse rough feel unlike Se7en’s tongue. He wanted badly to rock into Se7en’s body, the rhythm of his movements driven by a need he couldn’t understand and when he breathed a heavy sigh and began to slither on Se7en’s body, the older man knew it was time to show Min exactly what desire was.

He was gentle, stroking until he felt Min riding over his stomach. Rubbing his lover’s back, Se7en kissed Min’s neck and jaw, finding spots that made him shiver and moan. Slowly, he found Changmin’s mouth, sucking on the tip of the younger man’s tongue and pressed the barest tip of his index finger against the tight pout of Min’s body.

Lightning poured through Changmin’s legs and shoulders. Se7en watched as it hit Min’s face and opened his eyes wide, startled at the power of sensations breaking over him.

Unable to resist Changmin’s beautiful face, Se7en whispered for the younger man to lower his head, wanting a kiss to seal what they would start. Min complied, unable to do more than travel over Se7en’s wide mouth with tiny butterfly sips, his hips moving against his lover.

“I can’t wait to see you like this under me.” He whispered into Min’s mouth. The younger man sighed, opening his kiss further, matching the other’s ardor with a powerful fierceness Se7en barely knew he had. With

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Min's hands on his shoulders, Se7en reached down to part the closing of the other's jeans, working his free hand between them.

He gripped at Min's length, just to find the heft of it in his palm before running over the head with his fingers. Nearly jerking back from shock, Min pressed up into the curled length of Se7en's other hand, sliding the index tip into him. Gasping, Changmin still, unable to move or press back, trying to comprehend everything going on around him.

"Close your eyes, Minku, and tell me what you feel."

Changmin's eyes fluttered closed, dampening the light around him to a warm deep grey. He could hear Se7en's hoarse breathing and then the supple wetness of his lover's tongue finding the trail of his throat. His sex ached and throbbed under Se7en's hand, twitching as if it had a life of its own. Min knew he wouldn't be able to last long if the fingers wrapped at the base of his shaft started moving. He had no willpower left inside of him to hold off his release.

Then there was the slight fullness of Se7en's index finger poised at the entrance of his body. It stung just a bit, laying there motionless but when Min moved, he could feel the pulling against the firm walls of his pout and he desperately wanted more of Se7en inside of him.

He nearly lost his breath at the shock of that desire.

A pulsating knot lay just beyond Se7en's reach. With his eyes closed, Min could feel the aching want coursing up and down his spine, ending just under his lover's hand. He knew that if he rocked back just a bit further, he could pull Se7en into him. And at that moment, Min wanted his lover buried so deep that he could weep.

"I need you." Min gasped. "Please, need."

"I know." Se7en murmured, reassuring Min. "I promised you a taste. Do you want to try something too?"

He couldn't trust his tongue so Changmin nearly shook, thinning his lips to stop the moaning pleas he couldn't seem to stop whimpering.

"Undo my sweats." Kissing Min's mouth gently, Se7en felt his young lover reaching for the drawstrings, tugging them loose and to the side. "If you want to touch me, you can. Okay?"

"Okay." Whispering, Changmin nodded, touching the brush of fine hair around Se7en's navel and then the sharper texture of hair above his groin. The other's sex lay firm and rigid, sliding slightly under Min's fingers until he grasped at it, drawing a tortured hiss from Se7en's mouth.

"Go easy, baby." Se7en smiled at Min's shocked look. "Take your time and just feel what you do to me."

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Changmin quivered, shifting and then gasping when Se7en's finger slid down until the first joint was buried into the press of his body. Panting, Min bit down against Se7en's neck, drawing a nip of skin between his sharp teeth. Through the haze of emotions, he heard the intake of his lover's breath and the jerk of the man's chest but he was beyond caring. All Min wanted to do was consume the man that stroked at his body and mind until he couldn't stand it any longer.

He was either going to be consumed by the fire working through his body or die chewing through his lover's soul.

Either would make Changmin happy.

"You're bigger than I am." Circling Se7en's sex with his fingers, Min felt at the man's heft, wondering what other differences they had. "You feel longer."

"This isn't a science experiment, lover." He reminded the young man. "Just let go of that rigid control you like to hold onto and let me show you how good you can feel."

Circling around Min's entrance, Se7en moved in further, burying another inch into the young man's willing body. He listened carefully to the anguished pants coming from his lover's mouth, biting the inside of his cheek when Min tightened the hold he had on Se7en's sex. Stroking at Min's length, he pulled and moved around the head, letting the moisture weeping from the tip spread over the soft velvet skin.

"Se7en..." Min cried out as the older man maneuvered around his length, finding the thick vein running under him and tracing it with the ball of his thumb. I can't hold onto this any longer. I just can't."

"Just give me a minute, baby. I'm going to show you how it feels to be made love to." Se7en kissed at Min's mouth, urging the young man to wait for him. Stretching down, Se7en reached into Min's body, coaxing him to press down and open up for him. A moment later, he felt Min give in, forcing his body to stop resisting and let Se7en in.

It was the moment the older man had been waiting for.

Slick with spit, he pressed in and stroked at the tucked away button of nerves inside of Min's body. The first time he brushed against it, Changmin stiffened, rigid and shaking. The second pass of his finger spilled out a flood of sensations through Min that he couldn't fight.

"Shichi. God, no." Min cried out, shuddering and unable to form a thought.

"Do you want me to stop, Minku?" Se7en teased a kiss from Min's open mouth, capturing the fierce groan from Changmin's shattered control in the echo of his throat. Stroking harder behind, Se7en began to match the



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rhythm of his fingers cupped around Min's shaft, the younger man's helpless whimpering peaking with each drive of his hand.

It was over too quickly for Se7en. It seemed to last forever for Changmin.

Gasping, the young man released, clutching his lover's shoulders and burying his face into the crook of Se7en's neck. Panting, Min couldn't catch his breath, a hoarse screaming cry crawling out of his throat and into the still air of the living room. Outside the rain continued, cloaking them in a sheet of water and hiding them from the darkening night. The city's moisture was echoed in the crease of Se7en's palm, the jerking spasm of Min's sex spilling his seed against his lover's skin.

He lay against Se7en then realized he was probably dead weight on the singer's broad shoulders. Lifting his head up, Min stared down into Se7en's gentle face, breathing in the scent of their love making on the other's hand.

"Shichi." Min slowly sat up, trying to ease himself from Se7en's body. "I'm probably too heavy."

"It's okay. You're fine." Se7en grinned. "You're blushing again. After everywhere that my hands have been, you're still blushing."

"Stop teasing me." Changmin pulled himself loose of Se7en's embrace, unsure if he could walk. He felt an emptiness that begged to be filled, the slight burn of Se7en's touch at the inside of his body. "It didn't hurt. Shouldn't it have hurt?"

"It probably will when we move to other things." Se7en reached for his water, moistening a pair of napkins and wiping his hands clean. Balling up the refuge, he cupped Min's face and kissed him. "That is if you want to move onto other things."

"I do." Min nodded, shy under Se7en's searing gaze. "You made me feel like I couldn't breathe but I never wanted to stop. It felt like I died for a second but everything was just too much to bear."

"Good." Se7en rested his head against Min's forehead, kissing the tip of his lover's nose. "That's what I was hoping you'd say."

"Did you...?" Min looked down at his hands, realizing he'd lost track of what he'd been doing to Se7en as the electricity of his body took over his mind. "God, did I...? I'm sorry!"

"It's fine, Minku. I'm going to have to do more laundry, if that's what you're asking." He laughed, kissing Min's crimson cheeks. "How about if we call this a night?"

"So soon?" Min pouted, looking at his half-eaten pho and his barely nibbled-on Se7en.

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“Baby, if you could see how sexy you look sitting at the edge of the couch with your hair all around your face and your pout red and swollen,” Se7en murmured darkly. “You’d know exactly how much danger you were in of never being let out of this apartment again.”

“That wouldn’t be so bad, Mitsu.” Changmin smoothed his hair away from his face, giving Se7en a wicked grin. “At least I’d have you to keep me company.”

“Come here, brat.” Se7en grabbed at Min, dragging him back down on the couch and laying on top of him. “I have a few more kisses to steal before I take you home. I think I’m still a little bit hungry for mink.”

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Changmin lay with his back against Se7en's chest, his legs curved between his lover's, the rise of his rear nested against the other man's hips. The older man played with his hair, long fingers stroking out shanks of dark silk, wrapping the strands around his palm and then releasing the twisted curls, watching them fall back into place against his lover's cheek.

They'd fed each other cold pho, laughing at the mess Se7en made when the soup splattered over his face. He'd put on a melancholy album, the sensual discord of the music perfect for the graying mists clouding the apartment's windows, the ambient light from the nearby buildings refracting white and blue prisms against the blackness beyond. Full of food and lazy from their play, Min leaned back on Se7en, listening to the other man's breathing and the music coming from the stereo speakers.

"Shichi," He lolled his head back, looking up at Se7en's face. "Can I ask you something?"

"Sure, Minku. I've got no secrets from you."

"How was it when you first..." Min bit his lower lip, stumbling over his question. Clearing his throat, he pressed forward. "The first time you had sex. What was it like?"

"Boy or girl?"

"Aish, why do you ask me questions to my questions?" Min slapped the man's thigh. "Boy then. Since I think that's more relevant. Was it nice?"

"It was okay." Se7en thought back on the man who'd first touched him. "I remember thinking; is this it? Is this all there is? Later on, I realized he didn't really care if I got any pleasure from it. He just wanted his own."

"That's sad." He murmured, stroking at the spot he'd hit. "I'm sorry."

"I didn't know any better. It hurt and everything was so rushed." The older man nodded, wrapping his arms around Min's chest. "It felt exciting and daring. I was younger than you are now and I was so shocked that he found me attractive. I just wanted to make him happy. Now that I think back on it, I realized that it could have been better."

"Was he your first ever? I mean, did you have sex with women first or men?"

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“No,” Se7en laughed, a rumbling chuckle under Min’s back. “I’d already discovered girls. A long time before then. He was my first guy. One of my dance teachers. Much older than me but very sexy. He was the first one to make me feel like I wanted another man.”

“Was that scary?” Min kissed the mound of Se7en’s thumb as the other’s hand passed in front of his mouth, a leisurely stroll exploring the skin around Min’s throat. “Did you know you liked men before? At all?”

“Some. A little bit but I thought that it was just silliness on my part. I grew up in a very traditional household.” He reminded his younger lover. “I’m the youngest but the only boy. My parents weren’t very happy that I became a singer and dancer. They wanted me to be more... conservative. We’re not on the best of terms but it’s getting better. They don’t know about my love life. It’s better that way.”

“I’m sorry.” Frowning, the young man thought of his mother, a progressive woman who he could share anything with and who accepted her son’s less conventional choices. “I wish you had a better relationship with them.”

“It’s okay, Minku.” Se7en kisses the top of his lover’s head. “I’m fine with it.”

“You’re too sad inside, I think.” Changmin grumbled. “That man, was he nice to you afterwards?”

“Ah, my one track Minku.” He struggled to put the relationship into something Min could understand. “He was my lover for a few more times. But it was too... it hurt too much. He didn’t take care with me and I began to hate it.”

“But you did it again?” The young man snuggled back against the other’s strong body. “Why?”

“Because I felt like he must have been doing something wrong. It took me a long time to figure that out. I thought I’d done something wrong and that’s why it hurt. I still wanted men to touch me but I was afraid.” The singer shrugged.

“And I couldn’t ask anyone around me because I didn’t want anyone to know what I’d done. I was very hesitant back then.” He laughed at the shyness he’d carried around inside of him during his younger days. “Eventually some of the older dancers were talking and I worked up enough courage to ask questions. I learned a lot from them.”

“Like what?”

“You are so curious.” Laughing, he thought about the long way around that he’d learned about sex. “Well, that I should have used something slick. Or at least he should have. I wouldn’t have known. And that a condom is

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more than necessary. It's critical. I use one all the time now. After that, I went to get tested and found out I was okay but I was scared that he could have gotten me sick."

"Condoms." Min furrowed his brow. "I've heard some of the others say that condoms make it hard for them to feel the sex. Not the members. They don't talk about those kinds of things. Some of the other guys around us. Are we...?"

"Oh hell yes, baby." Se7en got very serious, his fingers along Min's jaw. "You don't know where I've been and for all of my precautions, something could have happened that I don't know about. I'm not going to risk you because of some idiot's idea that wearing a condom is stupid or that it numbs the feeling."

"If anything, if it numbs the sensations, you should be able to last longer." He shrugged. "I'm all for lasting longer."

"Me too." Min grumbled. "I just can't seem to do it though."

"Honey, you're young and this only has only been your first couple of times." Se7en reassured him. "As your body gets used to how it feels, you'll be more accustomed to it. And then, you'll forget all about how long you take."

"This is so complicated." He sighed. "It's confusing. Condom. Oil. Time."

"You deserve those things, baby. They're important." Brushing his cheek on Min's hair, Se7en sighed. "The first times for me, I hurt too much afterwards. Each time it got worse until I was scared to have another guy touch me. That taught me a lot. It was better afterwards because I knew more and I wasn't going to let someone rush me. And when I wanted to.. change sides, I knew what to do. The best thing you can give a lover is time and attention. It really is."

"I need to learn that." Min nodded. "I promise. As soon as I can control my own body."

"I don't mind your body." Another kiss, lingering along Min's cheek. "I like taking my time with you. It's like finding small little treasures that you've got hidden. Every time I kiss a new spot and you react, I know it's pleasure you feel and not pain. Love doesn't have to hurt. It shouldn't if it's done right."

"Jaejoong said it hurt a little bit. Then it goes away. Well Yunho makes the pain go away."

"You don't talk about condoms but you talk about that? Se7en chuckled, imagining his lover discussing sex with the older singer. "It's more like a discomfort. But slowing down helps with that. And if you're not ready, we stop. I will always stop."

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“That’s not going to give you anything.” Min frowned. “How are you going to...”

“Baby, I’m not to get any pleasure by fucking you.” He said softly. “The only way I’m going to be satisfied is if we make love. I’m not in this with you because you’re someone I can use to get sex from. I’m done with that. I can get sex anywhere. There’s nothing like having the feel of a friend around you or inside of you. If it’s not someone I love, or at least like, then why should I bother? I might as well use my hands.”

“Hey, I used my hands the other night.” Hissing, Min leaned back, hating his face. “God, I hate you. Look at this. Make this stop.”

“You’re cute when you blush. You try to be so mature and then your skin pinks.” Se7en rubbed his cheek against Min’s. “You’re adorable.”

“I don’t want to be adorable.” He grumbled. “I want to be sexy.”

“Baby, trust me. You’re very sexy.” Se7en tilted his young lover’s head back, guiding him with his fingers. Taking a kiss from Min’s pout, he murmured as he bit at the other man’s neck. “You have no idea how sexy you look when you’re writhing underneath me. Even sexier on top of me. I’m going to have to take a long time experimenting to see which I prefer the most. A very long time.”



Jaejoong was still up when Changmin let himself into the apartment. He nodded a greeting to their youngest, moving over to the side of the couch, cradling his bowl of ice cream in one hand. Sliding his shoes from his feet, Min came over and flopped down next to the singer, resting his head on Jae’s thigh.

“Did you wait up for me?” Min sniffed at the ice cream. It was vanilla, too plain for his tastes. “What’s the brown stuff?”

“Cinnamon.” Jae grinned at Min’s look of displeasure. “I like it. And no, I didn’t wait up. I was nearly asleep when my stomach said it wanted ice cream. So I woke up and got a little bit.”

“Did you have fun?” The older man asked, then burst into laughter at the look on Min’s face. “Never mind. Forget I said anything.”

“I hate you.” Changmin curled his legs up and put his feet against the couch arm. “I hate all of you. I hope your voice goes out and I’ll laugh at you so hard, I’ll pee my pants.”

“You love me. No one else puts up with your crap.” Jaejoong kissed Min’s forehead, offering the younger man a spoon of ice cream. Shrugging at Min’s wrinkled nose, Jae licked the utensil clean, using his tongue to draw long swipes of soft vanilla cream from its bowl. “Did you eat dinner?”

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“We had pho.” Unable to suppress his smile, he continued. “Twice. We got sidetracked halfway through. Cold pho is not very good. On the other hand, I like cilantro now. Well, cilantro-flavoured Se7en.”

“Are you okay?” Jae set his bowl down, the ice cream forgotten in favour of spending time with his youngest member. “You didn’t...um,”

“We didn’t do everything. No.” Min shook his head. “He wants to go slowly. It’s driving me wild and at the same time, I’m glad for it because I’m a bit scared. I keep thinking; how the hell are we supposed to get that in there?”

“It works.” Jaejoong nodded. “Just, carefully. And then not so carefully when you get used to it. Sometimes, even very not-carefully and you have to be very cautious about how you move during rehearsal.”

“Joongie-ah,” Changmin had a familiar look on his face, one Jaejoong knew all too well.

“What do you want to ask?” The older man smirked when Min grimaced at him. “You always have that sound in your voice before you ask something that might be embarrassing. You might as just well just ask. I’ll tell you anything you want to know. Well, maybe not anything. Yunho might object to some of it.”

“No, I don’t want details about hyung. That’s the last thing I want.” He waved his hands in the air, erasing any mention of Yunho from the conversation. “I just wanted to know how long it took before you and hyung did it all the way. I want to know what to expect. Shichi said that he would wait until I felt ready. How do I know when I’m ready?”

“Shichi? Huh,” Jae grinned. “You even call him Se7en in Japanese? That’s bad.”

“Aish, pay attention. Sometimes talking to you is like trying to tie a rope to a butterfly’s leg.” Min slapped at Jae’s shin. “He said he doesn’t feel like Dong-Wook any more. More like that part of him died off when he wasn’t watching. It’s rather sad, really. He told me Dong-Wook was a dreamer and he doesn’t dream any more.”

“Ah, you’ll help him with that, Minnie-ah.” The singer reassured his youngest. “You’re good for him in that way.”

“Answer my questions so I can go to bed.” Stretching out his legs, Min felt his back pop, a rush of relief along his spine. He’d spent too long leaning over the centre console of Se7en’s car, lingering over kisses before reluctantly sliding out of the door and into the apartment, ducking to avoid the rain pouring down from the balcony ledges above him.

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“Talk.” Min ordered. “Now.”

“What was the question?” Jae suffered another light blow to his leg. “Ouch. How will you know when you’re ready?”

“Yes. And be serious.” He sighed. “I don’t want Se7en to feel guilty if he’s hurt me because I rushed things. And the only answer out of him that I get is, I’ll know. I want details. I want to know exactly when and how.”

“You measure things too precisely.” Shaking his head, the singer replied with a sigh. “What happened to giving up control?”

“Some control.” Changmin corrected. “Not all. I just.. am curious.”

“What he did tonight...and I don’t want to know the details, I really don’t.” Jae put his hand over Min’s open mouth. “Did it feel good?”

“Yes.” He mumbled through his hyung’s fingers. “It felt uncomfortable and then everything just felt good. It was like I didn’t want to stop moving and my body just seemed to know what to do. I couldn’t even think.”

“That’s a good thing for you then.” Jae murmured. “When was the last time you just let yourself feel?”

“Sex shouldn’t just be about feeling.” Min quirked his mouth. “Is it?”

“Pretty much.” Jaejoong shrugged, dipping his finger into the melted ice cream and sucking it off the drops. “It’s about how you feel doing it and how the other guy feels. I like hearing how I make Yunho feel, especially when I’m the one moving on top of him.”

“Ah, no details.” Min closed his eyes tight, trying to not imagine the elder members naked and moving against one another. “Great, now I won’t be able to get that out of my head. It doesn’t help that I know what hyung looks like rotating his hips while dancing. I’m going to be cursed now.”

“It’s not so bad.” He tweaked Min’s nose, giggling at the other man’s silliness. “Sometimes Yunho gets bothered by seeing me with one of you. His mind wanders and he says it troubles him. I keep telling him it’s okay. Even a bit healthy maybe? So long as he only comes to my bed, then I don’t mind.”

“I don’t think Yunho has that same viewpoint where you’re concerned. I’m sure he threatened to break Se7en’s face if he came near you again.”

“Probably.” Jae nodded. “Yunnie-ah is very jealous. He’s working on it and it’s not like he says it’s my fault. He knows he can trust me. He just doesn’t trust anyone else.”

“He just wants you safe.” Changmin murmured, hearing the words echo in his ears. “Like he wanted me safe. Bastard. I want to blame him but I can’t give him all of it. He shouldn’t have hit Shichi though.”



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“Yep. Although he could have used a less violent way of doing it.”

“Probably.” He agreed, twisting over onto his side. Staring at Jaejoong’s calm face, he contemplated his situation. “I just don’t want to disappoint Se7en. Suppose I’m a bad lover?”

“Minnie-ah, if you love someone and care about how they feel, then you can’t be a bad lover.” Jae stroked at the young man’s face. “If he takes his time, which he said he’s going to do, then you’ll hurt for a little bit...well not hurt but you’ll feel like you’ll want to pull away. It’s just your body adjusting.”

“Just don’t push yourself to where you feel like you can’t take any more pain. Then you know you’re rushing things and you could really damage yourself.” Jaejoong made a face. “I’ve done that with Yunho. I don’t regret it at the time, and sometimes it even feels good, but afterwards, I hurt and Yunnie-ah feels so guilty. I feel bad for making him feel bad.”

“Then the next time I want him that badly, he tries to tell me to slow down and I ignore him. So we go through it all over again.” The singer shrugged. “I kind of think I’m being selfish because after those times, he spends so much time trying to make sure I’m okay when I’m the one who couldn’t wait. I sort of do it to myself and he with the guilt.”

“Do you ever think about...switching places with Yunho?” Min tentatively asked. “Se7en and I, we talked a little bit about it. He wants me to try that if I want to. He says he likes it sometimes. I don’t know.”

“Do you not know because he’s always been the more dominant one or because you don’t know if you want to do it?”

“Probably more the first than the second.” Changmin replied. “Do you think about?”

“Does that go under too much detail of Yunnie-ah?”

“No,” The young man said. “It’s more about how you feel about it. I don’t want to know when or if you do it. Just if you’ve talked about it.”

“We have. Recently too.” Jae murmured. “He feels like he’s not offering me enough of himself. And I told him I wasn’t sure how I felt about it. It’s harder for the two of us. We came into our relationship like blind fumbling elephants. Everyone else just seems to glide right along. Yunnie and I seem to have to work hard at even the smallest things.”

“It’s better to talk about these things openly.” The older man touched Min’s mouth, tracing over the bite marks left behind by the youngest’s sharp teeth. “Is that your phone ringing?”

A chiming chirrup rattled Min’s backpack and he leapt up, his eyes crinkled with joy. Grinning broadly, he dug out the cell, leaving his bag behind as he headed for his bedroom, the conversation with the older man

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forgotten behind him. Jae heard a yelp of surprise and a hastily muttered apology from Min then Yunho walked into the living room, rubbing at his chest.

“He has sharp elbows.” Yunho sat down next to his lover, grabbing Jae and dragging him into his lap. “He’s left a bruise.”

Jaejoong smiled and kissed a spot just below Yunho’s collar, widening his eyes innocently and pouting. “Was that where you got it?”

“Um no, someplace a bit lower.” Yunho looked down at his own chest, pretending to be perplexed. “I think I’m going to have to take my shirt off and have you inspect all over. I might need to be kissed everywhere just in case. He might have hit me in more than one place. You can’t ever be too safe about having your wounds kissed and made better.”

“Nope. I agree.” Jae nodded curtly, a determined look on his pretty face. “I shall do my best to cover every inch with my mouth so you’re fully safe and healed.”

“Ah, I appreciate that.” Kissing his lover’s mouth, he murmured pleasantly at the taste of vanilla and cinnamon he found on Jae’s tongue. “You taste good.”

“It was good. Do you want me to get you some?”

“Oh no, I’ve got enough right here.” Yunho held Jae’s chin in his fingers, turning his lover’s face until their lips met. Sliding his other hand down, he stroked at Jaejoong’s side, lifting up his t-shirt and running his fingers up to the nipple peak on Jae’s chest.

Deepening the kiss, neither one of them heard the door opening or the quiet footsteps of the other members coming in late, thinking the household was fast asleep. It wasn’t until Yunho heard Yoochun gasp in shock then burst into a deep laughter did he pull back, leaving Jaejoong gasping on his lap.

Junsu peered around Yoochun’s chest, disgruntled and a bit annoyed at the older members splayed over the couch. Shaking his head, he tsked at them, hefting his luggage down the hall and muttering behind him. “And they yell at us for doing that on the kitchen counter. We all have to sit on the couch. The counter at least can be wiped clean.”

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Se7en adjusted the collar of his jacket, listening to the feed coming in live from the main studio. He had about fifteen minutes to get finished, pulling the paper towels the makeup artist tucked around his neck to avoid getting any powder on his clothes. He looked up and found Changmin standing in the doorway, reflected back at him in one of the mirrors lining the wall. Meeting Min's eyes, he smiled, a warm feeling in his belly.

"Hey, baby." Sliding into Korean, Se7en turned around, stepping forward automatically and then stopping, remembering he couldn't kiss the young man in front of him. People were walking by, hurriedly caught up in their lives and work. Still he couldn't risk it. As much as he wanted to.

"Hi," Min glanced down, his wealth of hair falling forward into his face. Se7en's fingers itched to brush it free from his lover's cheeks. His tongue ached to see how deep the sweetness of Min's mouth went. "We're down the hall for the night time show."

"Ah, Minku." Se7en leaned against the wall next to Min, not trusting himself to pull the younger man into the room. If he could sit against something, he knew he would pull Min into the crux of his legs and kiss him senseless. "I thought we agreed that we wouldn't come to each other at the studio. If I'd known I could break that promise, I would have cornered you in a broom closet a long time ago."

"I had to see you." Changmin came closer, just brushing Se7en's shoulder. "It's been days."

Their schedules had quickly filled up, bumping any free time off of the books. Late evenings became their salvation, an hour or sometimes less spent on the phone talking about their days and what they wanted to do once they had time.

They just never seemed to have time.

"I'm glad you came." Se7en's eyes followed the progress of an older woman nearly running down the hall, her arms stacked with tapes. He reached up and ran the back of his hand against Min's bare forearm, feeling the soft skin of his lover and wanting more. Leaning forward, he whispered below his breath. "God I want you. My tongue misses the taste of you. Every time I sip something sweet, my heart spins and says; No, this is not Minku. Where is our Minku?"

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“You’re going to make it hard for me to go back and have an interview.” Changmin’s mouth ghosted a breathy kiss across the air onto Se7en’s lips. “If they make me sit up front this time, I’m going to kill you. Talk about safe things.”

“Safe things?” Se7en mused aloud. “What the hell can we talk about that’s safe. You make drinking tea erotic. The sound of it over the phone last night nearly made me...”

“No, no talking about that.” Min stopped him, holding up one hand. “Safe. Something safe. The weather. That’s safe.”

“Is it still raining outside?” He asked softly. “I’ve been inside for a few hours.”

“Yep.” The younger man replied. Tokyo’s rainy season seemed to last forever but the city needed it. He rather liked it. It softened the hard lines of the buildings and turned the lights into stained glass rainbows against the night sky.

“Good, maybe I’ll be able to see you standing in it sometime. Your shirt plastered against your body and my tongue chasing after the rivers of water flowing down your back. Hell, I’ll even follow the water down that delicious ass of yours...”

Se7en’s mouth was immediately covered by Min’s quick hand, his words trapped in the young man’s palm.

“Stop. None of that.” Changmin sighed, feeling the thickness of his sex responding to Se7en’s murmurs. “You are so bad.”

“Can I get a picture of you two together?” A woman emerged at Min’s elbow, startling them both. Bowing deeply, she displayed her camera, a high-powered lens attached to an expensive looking device. “Studio shots are nice to have. It makes good public relations.”

“Ah, um...” Changmin stumbled, wondering what to say. They’d discussed keeping their relationship a secret and he was sure the look on his face when Se7en was near him would blow everything out in the open. He had no faith in his ability to keep himself looking immune to the older man’s touch.

“Oh, pardon me. While we are good friends,” Se7en bowed deeply, his Japanese a formal apology. Moving close to Min, his unseen finger tips brushed at the young man’s belly, traveling downwards until he briefly touched at the bulge under Changmin’s zipper. “We are from different companies. It would be awkward for us to be seen in a promotional photo together. I hope you understand.”

“Oh no, I understand.” She returned the man’s bow, smiling broadly and backing up. “Thank you so much. I shall take pictures of you later then.”

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“This is going to kill me.” Min whispered hotly. “Why are we talking in public? We can’t talk in public.”

“Baby, we need to make some time for each other. What are you doing tonight?” Se7en stepped back from Min, trying to give himself a little room to breathe. “Even if we just go for coffee. I need to see you. To at least touch you a bit.”

“I’m done at five today. I thought you had a thing with YG tonight.” Min cocked his head. The activity in the hall increased behind him, a few curiously casual glances at the pair of Koreans talking in the open door.

“We’re supposed to go to a club to be seen.” Se7en nodded at a stylist who’d worked with him earlier, not making prolonged eye contact in case the woman stopped to talk. “I’m going to skip it. I’d rather see you. Do you want to do something?”

How did he talk and make it sound so casual? Min wondered. His own stomach was twisting into knots at the thought of spending a few hours with Se7en. Another brush of the man’s fingers on his wrist made him shudder, remembering those fingers caressing him and then dipping down inside of him. His breath quickened, and Min struggled to control himself, his lungs beginning to burn from lack of consistent air.

“I don’t have anything until ten tomorrow.” Changmin mentioned, hoping he sounded as calm as he thought he did. Se7en’s eyes darkened, drawn by the erotic huskiness in his lover’s voice.

“How about if you grab a few things to wear and we can, maybe, try to spend that night together again?” Whispered, it sounded illicit. It became more dangerous when the tip of Se7en’s tongue touched the shell of Min’s outer ear. “Just the night. Same rules as before, Minku. May God help me survive that.”

“No touching.” Min hissed at the touch of the other’s tongue but he made no move to step away, panting a bit when Se7en blew on the spot to chill the wetness he left behind. “Do you want me to cook?”

“I think we can do that together. How about if I pick you up at about six-thirty? We can stop and shop for stuff for dinner on the way home.” He pursed his lips, struggling not to kiss Min. “I liked spending time with you in the kitchen. If I can’t spend my time inside of you, I should at least make some kind of heat you can stand.”

“Again, stopping that.” Min’s face immediately set on fire, his hands raised to press on his cheeks. “That would be fine.”

“You better get going before someone comes looking for you.” Se7en suggested slowly. “Or before I drag you in here and just ruin all of the pretty work someone did on your face. That eyeliner is making me hot.”

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“Oh, one thing.” Min said as he turned away. “Do you want me to meet you down at the street or at your apartment?”

“Minku, I’ll come knock on your door.” Se7en nodded, grinning at Min’s shocked look. “It’s about time your hyungs really see me in your life. It might as well be tonight. Just tell Yunho he can’t punch me. I’ve given a few free shots. He’s not getting any more.”



The knock on the door jerked Junsu’s attention around. Frowning, he stood, edging past Yoochun who nearly bowled over him to get to the door. Yunho came out of the bedroom, glancing at Jaejoong standing in the kitchen then knocked on Min’s door, shouting for the younger man to come out.

“I’ve got the door!” Junsu vaulted down the hall, shoving past the foot closets and reached for the door knob. Yoochun came to a quick stop behind him, almost slamming his lover against the wall when his socks hit the wooden floor and he nearly skidded into a freefall. “Hey, it’s mine! Get back, Chunnie!”

“You two are going to die if Min catches you being assholes.” Jaejoong called out, shaking his head.

“How old are they again?” Yunho shook his head, stealing a slice of carrot from the chopping board. Jae threatened him with a look, cutting a piece of daikon in half.

“They’re probably just happy to be home.” He began to julienne the white root, moving the bits aside and out of Yunho’s reach. “And don’t eat all the vegetables. They’re for dinner.”

“If they didn’t keep sneaking off to Korea for soccer matches, they would be home more often.” The leader shrugged, helping himself to another piece of carrot, dancing out of Jae’s long reach with a quick back step.

Opening the door, Junsu stared at Se7en, looking up and down the singer’s body. Yoochun’s head popped over Junsu’s shoulder, a curious and sweetly mischievous smile on his mouth. The older man nodded a hello and waited, pursing his mouth and rocking back on his heels as the two singers stood there staring at him.

“You going to let me in or maybe tell Min I’m here?” Se7en cocked one eyebrow, sliding his fingers into the pockets of his jeans. “Or do you make all of your guests stand in the outside hallway?”

“You’re not a guest.” Yunho stood at the end of the entrance hall, shooing the younger members in then heading back inside himself. “You’re a parasite that we’re letting Min date.”

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“You’re not letting me do anything, remember?” Changmin entered the living room, pulling his t-shirt down and carrying a familiar leather jacket. “Hey, Shichi.”

“Hey, baby.” Se7en knew it was risking a lot in kissing Min in front of the others. He liked taking risks. He also wasn’t known for his common sense.

He let the promise of smoldering heat sear down into the kiss he gave Min, a slow meandering seduction of his tongue along the younger man’s natural pout. Oblivious to the stares of the other members, Changmin allowed himself to be pulled into Se7en’s arms, molding himself against the other’s body and resting his hands on his lover’s hips. Taking one last small lick of Min’s mouth, Se7en rubbed noses with the younger man, giving him a ghost of a smile then whispered into the hot air between them.

“God, you taste good, Minku.”

He knew the younger man would blush. Se7en could count on it. He wasn’t prepared for the deep crimson tipping Min’s ears when Junsu crowed with laughter and Yunho cleared his throat warningly, the leader leaning against the kitchen counter with his arms crossed over his chest.

“Not our business.” Jaejoong didn’t glance up from his preparations, elbowing his lover in the ribs. “Remember?”

“Do I have to remember?” Yunho scowled, flattening his lips in disapproval. “It makes my fists itch.”

Whistling a long wolf sound, Yoochun edged around Jaejoong, his quick fingers grabbing a mushroom before heading to the refrigerator for a bottle of cold water. Jae huffed a breath of annoyance, wondering aloud if he should even bother cooking or just lay the vegetables out onto the table and the others could just pick and eat them raw.

“I don’t like raw vegetables.” Junsu frowned. “Don’t punish me because of them.”

“You’re right.” Se7en whispered into Min’s ear, looping one arm around his lover’s shoulder. “It’s like a family. You all sound like one.”

“We are one.” Junsu shrugged, sauntering up to Se7en and grinning at the man. “So, where are you guys going? And what time are you getting home, Minnie-ah? And isn’t he a bit too young for you? What are you? Almost thirty?”

“I, even though it’s none of your business, am not coming home until morning.” Changmin lifted a bulging backpack aloft to show the tenor. “And we’re just going to make dinner at Se7en’s place. And no, Susu-ah, he’s not thirty.”

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“Maybe watch a movie.” The older man replied, tightening his grip on Min’s waist. He saw the flicker of protectiveness flare in Yunho’s watchful eyes and the challenging tilt of the young man’s chin when he heard Min talk of their plans.

“Well if they watch movies like we do, I hope no one asks them about the plot.” Yoochun hoisted himself up onto the counter on the other side of the sink, dangling his feet against the cabinets.

“We actually watch the movie.” Min flushed again, remembering how he’d spent an afternoon with Se7en at an outdoor classical concert and couldn’t remember any of the movements that had been played. “Most of the time.”

“You ready, Minku?” Se7en couldn’t help but toss Yunho a satisfied smirk, bowing his head in mock respect as if daring the other man to growl at him. “I’m sure you’re hungry. We’ll need to get you fed soon.”

“Yep.” Changmin let Se7en pick up his pack, reaching for his laptop bag. “I’ll be home before the car comes around for us. Shichi said he’d drop me off at eight. It’s coming around at ten, yes? You’ll call me if there’s any change?”

“Are you going to answer the phone?” Yunho cocked his eyebrow, ignoring Jae’s exasperated sigh behind him. “Or should we just leave a voice message?”

“A message is okay if you don’t get me.” Min nodded, pleasant and sweet. “But I should answer. If not, I’ll call right back. Have a good night. I’ll see you all later.”

“Minnie-ah,” Yunho called out to their youngest before he could leave. “Be careful. This is all just new to us.”

“Not all of you.” The young man smiled sweetly, a wicked tint to his grin. “Junsu knew for a long time. He should be used to Shichi and I by now.”



“You are very evil.” Se7en kissed the back of Min’s neck as he held out a slice of pizza for the younger man to bite into. Leaning on his lover’s chest, his hands on Se7en’s back, Min took a delicate bite off the end, chewing thoughtfully.

They faced the windows, cuddled stomach to back with Min resting against a sprawled Se7en. It was becoming Changmin’s favourite way to sit with his lover. Being fed just made it that much more pleasant.

He’d been skeptical when the older man first suggested making pizza for dinner then reluctantly agreed after a few kisses coaxed him into it. Now, chewing on strands of savoury cheese and tender bread, Min wondered why



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he'd ever balked at the idea. Swallowing the bite, he lolled his head back onto Se7en's shoulder and looked up at the other man, licking the tomatoe sauce from his upper lip.

"Why am I evil?" Changmin pouted when the next bite went to Se7en, murmuring in appreciation when the slice was hovered in front of him. He took a bigger bite this time, getting a mouthful of salami and roasted garlic as well as cheese.

"Because you threw Junsu to the wolves back there." The older man kissed off a dollop of sauce from the corner of Min's mouth, licking at the spot as the young singer chewed and swallowed. "That was very evil."

"He deserved it. He was being a brat." Min nodded. "Never exact revenge when you can have someone else do it for you."

"You are just a font of knowledge and wisdom, Minku." Se7en shook his head in amazement. "Remind me to never piss you off."

"It's different between us. You'd never try to get me into trouble with the other members." He thought on that for a moment then grumbled. "Wait, you did get me into trouble with the other members. Hm, I'll have to deal with that later."

"I've already had Yunho at my throat." He reminded him. "I'd rather not have Jaejoong there too. Did you see how thin he sliced those vegetables? I was afraid to come near him."

"Joongie isn't violent. Well, not like that." Min shrugged, grabbing Se7en's wrist and leading the half-eaten slice back to his own mouth. "If he's going to hurt you, he'd do it with his fists. I'd rather have Yunnie-ah mad at me than Joongie. He's vicious when he's pissed off."

"Point noted." He held the pizza steady for Min to chew on, watching the slice disappear quickly. "Did you eat at all today?"

"We had some rice for breakfast but we were all running late." Changmin mumbled around his food, covering his mouth with one hand. "Sometimes eating is all the break we have and that doesn't last for long. It's getting better now. It used to be we'd eat instant noodles in the van while driving someplace else. Or stopping just long enough for a protein bar during dance rehearsals."

"That's not good for you." Se7en frowned. "It's like SM is wringing every last bit of you out while they can."

"It's what we signed up for." Min shrugged. "And we're successful. It's not a bad trade-off. Once our contracts are over, we'll all figure out what we want to do."

"Do you guys think you'll remain a group?"

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"I can't imagine my life without them." Changmin murmured, his heart aching at the thought of losing the others around him. "In the beginning, it seemed like a stepping stone and now, I don't want to think about what I would do if I didn't have the four of them around. I think they feel the same way."

"No one else lives as intensely as the five of you do." He commented casually. "It's kind of scary. You don't have lives."

"We live okay." Another shrug, the young man resigned to his lifestyle. "And we do have breaks from one another. Besides, it works for the five of us. I don't think I'd have it any other way now. Except maybe Junsu's running through the house. He's like an elephant."

"Are you full?" Se7en glanced over at the table, looking at the scant leftovers cooling on a plate. "I know I can't eat one more bite...of pizza, any way."

"I'm full." He suppressed a belch, covering his mouth. "I think I ate too much. It was so good."

"Ah, I can think of some ways for you to burn that off." Purring, the older man tilted Min's head to one side, nibbling up the younger man's long neck. "Remind me to thank the designer for giving me such a wide couch. It makes doing this so much easier."

"How about if we do this on the very wide bed the designer gave you?" Min swallowed, hoping the downcast lids over his eyes were more seductive than shy. He'd spent a few hours practicing in the mirror, trying to emulate Jaejoong's smolder but he wasn't quite sure if he'd mastered what he was trying to achieve.

The resulting moan on Se7en's mouth on his shoulder and the hardness pressing up against the small of his back told Min that he'd been more than successful.

Or that Se7en was very easily aroused.

He was happy with either at the moment.

"I can do that." Se7en slid from the couch, hooking his arms under Min's knees and around his back, lifting the young man off of the cushions.

Grabbing wildly at his lover's shoulders, Min yelped in surprise then burst into laughter as the older man headed towards the bedroom, Se7en moving the door open with a slight kick of his foot.

"What about the pizza?" Min motioned behind him, hoping he wouldn't throw Se7en off balance and end up tumbled onto the hard floor.

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“The pizza can wait.” The singer gently laid Changmin down on the sheets, kissing his belly lightly and looking up through his bangs at his lover’s sweet face. “Right now, I’ve got my mind on dessert.”

# 27

Changmin was unsure of why he was so shy. But the feeling of bashfulness took him over as Se7en rested on his knees and hands, staring down at Min as he straddled the young man's body. Fisting his hands into the sheets, Min steadied his nerves while Se7en looked down at him, the older man's face nearly unreadable except for the welling blackness of his pupils, desire eating at his brown irises.

"God, you look so good." Se7en drank in the sight of his lover, wondering what he'd done in his life to deserve Changmin.

As innocent as an angel, Min's serious prettiness made Se7en's heart skip, the other man's long legs erotically sensual as they moved between Se7en's spread knees. The young singer let go of the sheets, lifting one hand to wipe at his cheek, slowly rubbing a finger tip across his lower lip. Bending over, Se7en dug his teeth into the hem of Min's shirt and pulled it up until his belly lay bare.

"Should I take this off?" Changmin asked softly, the barest whisper hardly audible over the heavy sound of his breathing.

"No, baby." He shook his head, leaning back to support his weight on his knees before running his hands under Min's shirt, feeling the strength of his lover's lean body. Working the shirt off, Se7en tossed it aside, returning to his contemplation of Min's long body. "I want to undress you. Slowly. I want to kiss every inch of skin that I reveal. Just let me do this right now. I want to unwrap you and watch your gorgeous face while I suck you red."

"I don't think I look good in red." Min's voice trailed off into a slow moan when Se7en's tongue licked at the rim of his navel. Writhing and wanting more, he whimpered under the nip of teeth traveling up his belly and finding his right nipple, exposed and helpless under his lover's ravenous hunger.

Se7en's thick hair was smooth between his fingers, a soft flowing black Min adored having against his pale skin. Another nip, harder and more urgent tugged electricity up from Min's groin, arcing from his chest into his lover's mouth. The delicious light pain gave him aches along the inside of his thighs and the tiny spot of pleasure he now knew he had inside of him throbbed, begging for Se7en's touch.

The sound of his lover's seductive chuckle on his skin drove him crazy.

Se7en's teeth were a guarantee that he'd stay insane.

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“Baby, lift yourself up for me.” The older man kissed under Min’s belly button, undoing Min’s jeans and tugging them free. “Just a little bit.”

Changmin’s long legs stretched out forever, Se7en thought to himself. He left a trail of kisses along Min’s thighs, licking at his pressed together knees before nudging his shins aside. Parted for Se7en’s inspection, Min covered his face with one arm, turning aside so his lover couldn’t see the shyness in his eyes. Under the bedroom’s soft lights, Min felt more exposed than he’d ever been in his entire life.

That is until Se7en’s tongue began to work on the line of muscles along his legs.

Rasping each curve of Min’s left leg, Se7en nipped at the delicate skin just on the inside of his thigh, right above his knee. Gasping, Min jerked slightly at the erotic journey Se7en’s mouth was taking, a circular route that led the other man to lift up Min’s right leg and place his shin on the older man’s shoulder.

“I need to taste you, Minku.” Se7en’s voice was a husky reassurance, nearly a command to still Min’s squirming. “I’ve been waiting days to do this.”

With his head lowered, all Min could see of Se7en was his profile, a strong masculine man savouring the delights of an untouched lover, taking his time to sip at every inch of skin he could. His strong teeth dragged over sensitive satiny flesh, biting at the round globe rising from the back of Min’s thigh then moving to lick gently at the young man’s weeping head.

Changmin swallowed hard, choking on his own breath. Gasping to keep himself steady, he reached down to stroke at Se7en’s hair and neck, rubbing at the soft hair at the nape of the older man’s head. His leg was lowered and the other was lifted, a wetness spreading under the crease of his knee then another bite, sinking into the bulge of muscle along his upper thigh. Se7en barely let the ache subside before he bit again, then laved at the hollow tucked between Min’s legs, leaving the soft sac untouched except for the barest brush of fingers along the seam running down his shaft.

“Shichi.” He gulped, the cool air of Se7en’s breath ghosting over the moisture from his tongue.

His lover’s sinful mouth pursed over the trail left by his tongue, a silvered glisten on his tanned leg. Each breath was becoming hard to take, his chest unable to move in enough air to fill his lungs. He wanted to do this to Se7en. He wanted to be able to give the other man the sensations crawling in and around his body. Begging didn’t seem to work. Reaching for the older man did.

Min reached down, his fingers following the silky trail of hair from Se7en’s navel down to the rougher patch below. Running his tips down over

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the man's hip bone, he then sought out the tightened shaft pressing against his own leg, Se7en's crouched form curled over his pelvis while his mouth left little bites along Min's upper thigh.

"Keep touching there and I'm going to keep going myself." Se7en warned, muttering against the rise of bone on Min's hip.

Daringly, Min continued exploring, moving from the velvet softness of Se7en's thigh to the sleek taut skin along his sex. He wanted to see more but Se7en's body was blocking him. Shifting onto his side, Changmin ignored the man's soft grumbling moan, kissing Se7en's shoulder.

"I want to taste you."

It was the simplest thing he could say. How could he explain to Se7en that he wanted to see what the man felt on his tongue or against the roof of his mouth. Suddenly in that instant of arousal, Min knew he couldn't be satisfied with just being touched. He needed to touch back, to explore and to taste.

Moving, Se7en lay on his side, his cheek against Min's hip. Carefully positioning his legs so as not to hit the younger man, he ran his hands under Min's rear, moving him into a better position. The world changed and shifted around Changmin, leaving him open to explore his lover's body and revel in the differences he found there.

He closed his eyes and sniffed first, deeply inhaling the soft powdery scent of Se7en's skin. There was a depth to the scent, a powerful pleasing fragrance that stirred his own sex. Underneath the masculine overtone, a hint of cloves, anise and coffee, Se7en's favourite soap and one Changmin had instantly fallen in love with.

Se7en's tongue returned to its own explorations, traversing over the tip of his shaft and around the bulb's rim. There was the slightest hint of teeth then the sensation disappeared, leaving a soft raspy feeling behind. Changmin sighed and rested his forehead against Se7en's leg when the older man took Min's moistened head into the warmth of his mouth, delicately sucking the helm into the curve of his palate.

His eyelids fluttering open, Min breathed a hot rush of breath onto Se7en's sex, watching intently as the final edge of skin tightened and held the shaft aloft. Tentative, he licked, an inquisitive taste along the slope of Se7en's head. Rewarded with a pleasant hissing moan, Min repeated the gesture then concentrated on the small dew drop of milky fluid pearling along the tip.

"It's sweeter than I thought it would be." Changmin looked up at his lover, astonished at the drop spreading over his tongue. "Jaejoong said it might be salty, depending on what you eat."

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“Could we maybe leave Jaejoong out of this bed for a bit, baby? I’d rather just concentrate on you if you don’t mind.” Se7en couldn’t hold back his laughter at his lover’s embarrassed face. Landing a wet kiss on Min’s thigh, he nuzzled the younger man’s belly, laving down the sparse hair he found there and chuckling softly. “You’re adorable, Minku.”

“Sorry.” Min ducked his head. “I suck at this.”

“Honey, if you sucked more, I wouldn’t be able to talk.” Se7en gasped as Min’s teeth sank into the softness of his sex’s head. “Ouch, watch the teeth. Go easy.”

“Oh,” His mouth rounded in apology, sincere and earnest. “I didn’t think...”

“It’s okay, honey.” Se7en rolled over onto his back, digging around the top of his night stand. Coming back with a bottle of gel, he kissed the tip of Min’s shaft, rolling the head into his mouth with a light suckling motion. Licking for a few moments, he brought Min back to a rigid hardness, sighing when his young lover returned his attentions to Se7en’s own turgid sex.

“What is that?” Changmin cocked his head when he heard the click of the gel bottle open. “I’m sorry. I keep asking questions.”

“I don’t mind questions.” Se7en propped himself up onto an elbow, showing the younger man the clear liquid lubricant he squeezed from the tube. “It’s a gel. Here, rub it between your fingers.”

“It’s nice.” Min sniffed, then tasted the gel. “Kind of sweet-tarty.”

“You’re not supposed to eat it.” He laughed. “It won’t get you sick but this isn’t an edible gel. There are those kinds. We can get some later if you want.”

“What do you do with this?” Min took the bottle, spreading more gel onto his fingers, testing out the slickness.

“Here, lay back down on your side.” Se7en gave Min’s sex a light kiss, licking along the shaft as he rubbed the gel over his fingers. Reaching down between his lover’s legs, he suckled hard along Min’s head, drawing the other’s sex deep down into his throat until the young man could barely hold his hips still.

“Shichi.” Changmin gulped, losing what little thought he had left in his mind.

Driven to distraction by Se7en’s mouth, he focused on the other’s sex, hoping to mimic what the man was doing to him. Se7en’s dry fingers gripped his root, pulling slightly up in time with his sucking. The sensation of his lover’s mouth and hand were nearly too much for Min to stand and he nearly

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choked when he returned to licking down Se7en's head, pushing the tip too far down his throat.

"Take it easy, baby." Se7en said in between licks. "No rushing. Let your mouth get accustomed to it. And be careful to breathe through your nose. You won't gag that way."

Inhaling sharply through his nostrils, Min tried again, getting the taste of Se7en's body into his throat. The fullness there felt so right in his mind, a musky sugar he knew was uniquely Se7en. No matter who he loved after this time, he would always remember the man who first touched him and showed him how to love. Patiently, Se7en guided Min with a gentle twist of his hips, rocking against Min's mouth with small shallow movements.

With the wave of sensations running over his body, Min wasn't prepared for the slight intrusion of Se7en's gel-covered finger moving into his body but the sudden fullness shattered his mind, leaving him weak. As his gasps around his lover's trapped head fluttered his tongue along Se7en's sex, Changmin could feel the older man slowly working into him, taking great care to slide out before the insertion overwhelmed him.

Se7en's rigid finger inside of him suddenly became too much.

And then, not enough.

With the palm of Se7en's hand resting firm against his rear, the gelled finger as far in as it could go, Min flexed down on it, rubbing the length of bone and flesh against the nerve bundle hidden inside of him.

He thought he was going to break apart right there under Se7en's hand.

Changmin was sure of it when Se7en returned to suckling his hard length, rotating and flexing his finger until Min thought he was going to weep from the invoked pleasure rocking his body.

Needing more and wanting to give, Min felt at the gel on his fingers and kissed the tip of Se7en's sex. Carefully, he returned to laving along the shaft and swallowing as much as he could get down into his throat and mouth. Then, when he felt Se7en twitching under his mouth, he reached down to the crenulated rim of Se7en's opening and slid the tip of his finger in.

Changmin was greeted with a clench of Se7en's strong backside muscles and a surprised hissing groan. Startled, he nearly pulled free, stopped by his lover's hand on the back of his palm, trapping him against Se7en's warmth.

"Don't." Se7en murmured, the colour of his eyes bled black with desire. "I like it. I just wasn't ready for it. I didn't expect you to do that."

"Should I stop?"



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“Only if you want to see me cry, baby.” Whispering, Se7en moved his fingers, sliding just the tip of his middle finger into the tightness of Min’s hole. Shocked and aroused, Min canted his hips forward, moving the other finger in deeper next to the one Se7en already had buried in him. “That’s it, honey. Is that what you want?”

Nodding, not trusting himself to speak, Min lay his head back, trying to catch his breath around the fullness in his throat and the taste of his lover on his tongue. Almost overwhelmed, he tried to focus on pleasuring Se7en further but could only capture the other man’s tip against the roof of his mouth, reduced to a primal suckling motion when Se7en began to move his fingers.

He heard himself moan, a guttural sound then a wave of light rode over his body, the pressure at the base of his sex building to crest out of him. Min’s fingers clenched, sliding around inside of Se7en’s warmth and then he brushed against a small nodule, feeling his lover’s hips rock from the touch. Breathing in deep, Changmin sucked harder on Se7en’s tip while his finger lightly stroked around the edges of the circular area.

Se7en’s ministrations increased, cued to the heaviness of Min’s panting breaths. Lost in power of what Se7en was pouring into him, Changmin lost control of the tightness balled up in his stomach, releasing his seed into his lover’s waiting mouth.

The electricity started at his groin spread over his limbs and up onto his belly, centering on his nipples. Changmin couldn’t stop his eyes from tearing up, the strength of his orgasm ripping loose any semblance of control he had left over himself. He could see Se7en’s dark eyes watching him, licking him clean and coaxing the few final drops of sensation from his trembling limbs and rear. Shuddering, Min realized his mouth was filled with his lover’s sweet saltiness and he swallowed, wanting to hold the taste in his belly.

Trying to kiss Se7en’s leg, Changmin’s movements freed another wave of release from his nerves, rendering him mute and mewling. Shaking, he didn’t resist when Se7en pulled free from his hands and merely murmured incoherently when his lover gathered him up in his arms, stroking at the softness of his hair and whispering into his ear.

“I’m here, baby.” The erotic whisper of Se7en’s voice was never more pleasing than right now, a coaxing plea for him to fall under Se7en’s touch. Shaking with the tremors of his release, Min laid into Se7en’s chest and surrendered to the sensations riding him, letting himself go into the darkness swallowing him.

“That’s my baby.” Min heard Se7en whispering, then a brushing lick along his neck before returning to suckle a kiss from Min’s mouth. “Go ahead, let it take you. Ride it and let me see you give in to it.”

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Shuddering as his body found it in itself to come again, just from the touch of his lover's hands on his torso and hips, Min cried out, weeping from the tremors' strength and the pleasure nearly too painful to take in. Gasping as the last vestiges echoed along the ends of his nerves, Changmin panted uncontrollably against Se7en's hard shoulder, unsure if he could stand on his own two legs.

Cupping one hand along Min's jaw, the older man stared into his young lover's face then kissed away the tears silvering his cheeks. Pursing his lips, Se7en gently pressed his mouth on Changmin's, rubbing a gentle caress into the other's swollen pout.

"I have never seen you look more beautiful than you do right now." Se7en murmured, holding his young lover close as an aftershock of tremors coursed through his limbs. "I am so glad you are here for me to love."

# 28

The beep of a missed call woke Changmin up, his cell chirping to poke at his languid brain. Turning over onto his stomach, he reached for his phone and jerked awake when his hand failed to connect with his nightstand.

Instead, his fingers were met with the solid curve of Se7en's shoulder.

Sitting up, Min winced, his body aching with a steady throb as he moved. Measuring the tiny pangs, he concluded it was less pain and more discomfort as if he'd overexerted a particular part of his body. Well, his mind reasoned, you did stretch out parts of us that haven't done those things before.

The memory of Se7en's mouth and fingers on and in him brought a new wave of tingling burn to his face, unseen by the man sleeping next to him. Changmin was thankful for his lover's slumber. Less thankful for the incessant pressure on his bladder and then the shock of thinking he slept too late and missed the van to take him to the group's first appointment.

Scrambling off the mattress, he dug around his backpack, coming up with his cell. Scanning through the messages while hurrying to the toilet, Min sighed with relief to see that it was not only a couple of hours until he was supposed to be at the apartment but also that the event had been cancelled because of rain. His day was now totally free. And he fully intended to crawl back into bed and sleep for as long as his body would let him.

Spending a few minutes in the bathroom was a welcome relief as was the new toothbrush Se7en left on the counter for him, just in case he'd forgotten his own.

He's too good for you, the gremlin muttered. You need to be nicer to him. Take care of him more.

Shut up. Min scolded his inner brain. If you can't be helpful, you need to stop talking. I need to trade you in for a more supportive sub-conscious. One that comes up with suggestions.

Without me, you'd spend all of your time dreaming, he scoffed at himself. And walk into doors.

Grumbling at his own thoughts, Changmin returned to the bedroom and stopped to stare at the man who became his lover.

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Se7en's nudity against the soft white sheets was a beautiful sight for Min, the sleek curve of his back covered from the waist down by the bed's rumpled linens. A mane of black hair framed his peaceful, sleeping face, the bridge of his nose straight and leading down to a sensual, relaxed pout. Se7en's long lashes gave the illusion of dusky kohl sweeps under the pale blush of his lids, his strong eyebrows arching over his brow ridge.

Awake, Se7en's handsomeness was defined by his quick, grinning mouth and expressive eyes. In sleep, his beauty bloomed under the faint erotic voyeur feel of watching his soul rise up from his body and into the calm of his face.

Changmin eased onto the mattress, crossing his legs underneath him and stared at his lover, unsure of how to feel about the man who opened up unexplored worlds for him to see.

Se7en held secrets, he realized. The carefree playboy was a thoughtful, methodical artist wrapped up by layers of silken tapestry that was meant to circumvent attention away from what was in the core; a very-human man who longed to love and give love, asking nothing in return but friendship and honesty.

Min wondered if he'd given Se7en those things. Then realized he could definitely give more.

"I could be more honest with you." Changmin murmured to the slumbering man, watching Se7en's mouth twitch slightly as the other man's dreams played behind his closed lids. "And I could trust you more."

"I spent a lot of time listening to what other people thought of you and then I realize now that I'm listening to people who only see what you want them to see." Pulling his legs up, he rested his chin on one chin and contemplated what he was going to do and be with Se7en.

A softly throbbing reminder inside of him gave Min clear perspective of how much Se7en adored him. He'd known it could have been worse. There were stories that he'd heard from Scarlet and Jaejoong, whispered horrors spoken when the pair thought that he wasn't listening.

He'd been listening, all right. And the details terrified him.

Jaejoong bore scars on his mind and heart. Min knew there were boys who wore them on their bodies. It hurt so much to find out Se7en was one of those young men. He'd seen the clouds in his lover's eyes when he'd talked about his first lover and sitting down with the slight discomfort he was having even after Se7en's careful lovemaking, Min's heart ached at the thought of how much pain he could have been in if Se7en had been less patient.

Or if he'd let Rain touch him again.

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The thrill of Bi's mouth on his at the time seemed to be an exotic forbidden thing. In retrospect, the kiss seemed sordid and dirty, something to be washed from his lips and scrubbed from his mind. There'd been none of Se7en's fire or compassion, just a slithering of lust and the taint of being used for satisfaction. Changmin could see the difference now. And was glad to have escaped the same fate that his lover suffered when he'd been younger.

"I'm sorry it wasn't good for you, Shichi." Min whispered. "I'm so sorry."

He kissed Se7en's temple, softly so as not to waken the older man. Sliding down to his side, he rested his head on the pillow, their noses nearly touching. Min couldn't believe he was awake. He could sleep anywhere and often did, a skill the other members envied. Now, laying besides his lover, the last thing he wanted to do was sleep. The world seemed so peaceful enrobed in rain and cradled by soft linens that smelled of their tangled bodies.

If he could, Min would steal the sheets and make them into a stuffed fox he could take with him where ever he slept.

Where did that come from? Changmin wondered. Why do I want to take pieces of what he's given me and tuck them away so I can have them always? Jaejoong told me that I shouldn't worry about how we love. Just that I should love.

Of course, Se7en said that it would be a good thing to leave Jaejoong out of our bed, his mind whispered. Why do you keep dragging him back in?

He gives good advice, Min nodded to himself. Joongie-ah is the one who told me to explore and take my time and that Se7en was being patient because he loved me, not because he didn't want me.

"Ah, so early in the morning for such a serious look." Se7en murmured, his eyes open and on Min's face.

"How long have you been watching me?" Changmin narrowed his eyes, making a face.

"I don't know." Se7en stretched, still on his belly. "How long have you been watching me?"

"Not long enough." The slight smile he got from that mouth made Min's stomach jump. When that mouth moved over to kiss his toes, he couldn't help but giggle, Se7en's tongue making the crease under his big toe sloppy and wet.

"Stay here. I'll be right back." Se7en murmured, sliding from the bed and padding over to the bathroom.

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The man prowled, Min thought, watching his lover through the open door. Brushing your teeth naked shouldn't be arousing but Se7en's wide shoulders, trim hips and taut backside was nothing if not erotic. Stepping around the corner to the toilet niche, Se7en stayed out of view for a minute then returned to wash his hands, winking in the mirror's reflection. He stalked through the bedroom, easing himself onto the sheets and kissing Min's ankle before snuggling up against the younger man.

"Good, you didn't move." Se7en peeked over Min's shoulder at the clock. "I've got to get you home soon."

"Our outing was cancelled. I guess it was supposed to be held outside and it's too wet. All of our fans would drown."

"That would be bad." Nodding somberly, Se7en kept a straight face. "It's hard to get new fans if you drown the old ones."

"Yes, very bad." He agreed, rubbing the tip of his lover's nose with his own. "I wanted to say thank you."

"For what?" His mouth pursed as he thought back on what he'd just done. "For the toothbrush?"

"No," Min slapped Se7en's shoulder lightly, kissing at the spot when the older man huffed in false outrage. "For last night. You made me feel so good."

"Good. I'm glad." Running his hand over Min's hip, Se7en kissed him. The older man's mouth tasted of cinnamon gel and masculinity, a rougher kiss softened by the intimacies they'd shared the night before. "You doing okay?"

"Yeah, I'm good." Burrowing down into the soft feather top of the mattress, Min stared into his lover's eyes. "I was thinking that your first time should be like mine is."

"Ah, no helping it now." The older man shrugged, moving his hips over until he could tangle his legs into Min's lanky shins. "I'm just glad it's me... instead of Rain."

"God," Min buried his face into Se7en's bare chest. "I can't believe that you know about Rain. Did Yunho tell you?"

"Partly," Se7en hedged. "I guessed about the whole thing, really. From what you said and things I overheard between you and the others. And I have to be honest with you, after you told me that someone hurt you, I asked someone to find out who it was for me."

"Why did you do that?" There was an ember of anger in Min's voice, subdued when Se7en gently kissed the space between his eyes.

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“I found out it was Rain before he could find out anything.” The singer said. “And I guess I’m more like Yunho than I care to admit.”

“When I heard about what he’d done, I was so fucking pissed off.” Se7en admitted. “I wanted to hurt him and I was scared deep down inside that it was one of my friends. Because you deserved better than to be treated like something to discard when he was done. I fully acknowledge that I’m a protective bastard and I don’t like seeing my friends hurt. And you are, first and foremost, Minku, my friend.”

“What would you have done if you found out from this guy?” Min asked softly, his cheek pressed against the pillow.

“Probably wanted to go beat the shit out of Bi.” He said calmly. “I’m not saying I’m a good guy, Minku. I’m not perfect.”

“I think he would have treated me like your dance instructor did.” Whispering, Min looked down, feeling a brush of hot tears along his lashes. “Maybe not as bad but I think I wouldn’t have liked it.”

“All the more reason to pound the shit out of him.” Se7en agreed. “But apparently, someone got to it before I could. So, moot point. All I’ve got to ask is that if he ever touches you again, you let me know.”

“No,” Min shook his head, sniffing back his tears. “I’ve got to deal with things on my own. If I tell any of you about it, I’ll make you promise not to do anything about it first. I’m good at extracting promises beforehand.”

“I noticed you throwing Junsu to the wolves before we left.” Se7en grinned. “Strategic tactic?”

“Ah, I knew he’d be safe.” A snort dismissed any threat Junsu might have faced. “Yunnie wouldn’t do anything to him because of Jaejoong and Chunnie. It was a small revenge. I have better still hidden. He’ll know better about crossing me in the future or making fun of you. A small price to pay for future silence.”

“Ah my little Sun Tzu.” Se7en laughed, cuddling Min close. “Remind me not to leave my Blackberry where you could find it.”

“I would never blackmail you.” Changmin murmured, biting lightly into Se7en’s lower lip. “I have other ways of getting you to do what I want you to.”

“True,” Se7en replied, gifting Min with another kiss. “So very true.”

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Minku, I would think that there was something wrong with you if you didn’t ask questions.”

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“Did you like it when I...” Changmin stumbled, his tongue refusing to comply with the words his mind was forcing onto it. “Um...”

“When you reciprocated?” Se7en moved his foot along Min’s ankle, brushing his toes on the younger man’s heel.

“Good word.” He nodded in agreement. “Yes, reciprocated. Did you mind? Or did you say you liked it because you didn’t want me to feel bad.”

“Honey, I liked it a lot.” A knowing grin lit up Se7en’s face, crinkling his eyes. “You didn’t believe me?”

“I just...” Min took in a deep breath. “You’re going to think I’m silly but I really only have Jaejoong and Yunho when I want to compare relationships. And well, my mom and our family. Junsu and Yoochun, you just can’t take them seriously.”

“You’re confusing me, Minku. What are you worried about?”

“Yunho is very dominant.” He thought on it, thinking of the older members’ interactions. “And it just seems like when I did that to you, it crossed over into what you should be doing to me instead of what I should be doing to you.”

Se7en exhaled thoughtfully, his eyes unfocused as he gathered his thoughts. Clearing his throat, he took his time replying. Min shifted on the bed, impatient and wondering if he’d somehow insulted the older man or shouldn’t have spoken of it.

“Baby, I guess the problem is that you’re thinking of our relationship top and bottom or seme and uke.” There wasn’t any of the customary amusement in Se7en’s voice, more of a tenderness as he shared what was in his heart. “Yes, we are two halves of some kind of whole but I don’t like to say that I’m going to dominate you every single time we have sex.”

“There’s a problem, I think, when two guys love each other.” Se7en explained. “I think we’re conditioned to try to fit our relationship into the traditional roles of a man and a woman, where one guy basically is the object and the other is the receptacle. Because that’s pretty much how a heterosexual relationship works.”

“But see, Minku, we’re not women. Our sexual organs are different. And our needs are different. We may love or want other guys but we’re guys.” He laved Min’s mouth, feeling the softness of his lover’s lips. “I like both men and women. I like have sex with either and I don’t want to confine myself to the traditional masculine role of topping someone because I’m supposed to be the more masculine of the guy.”

“You expect me to...?” Min’s breath shortened. “I’ve never done that. I wouldn’t know how...”



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“I’m not saying that we have to take turns or that it has to be this purely my turn-your turn thing.” Se7en explained. “I’m just telling you that if you want to, I’d like to. I don’t do that as often as I like probably because it takes a lot of trust on my part where my partner is concerned. I trust you, Minku and I think we can make it a pleasant experience for both of us but only if and when you’re ready.”

“Don’t constrict yourself to a role, baby.” The older man cautioned. “Don’t get caught up in what you think your position in bed should be. It can be what ever you want it to be. You’re a guy. You’re masculine. Don’t cheat yourself or try to shape yourself into something you think society wants just because you like having sex with men.”

“That’s hard to understand, Shichi.” Changmin’s mind wandered, crossing over boundaries he’d put up to help guide him along his relationship with the other man. “... Jaejoong...”

“Jaejoong and Yunho have their relationship.” Se7en shrugged. “It’s theirs, for better or for worse. And maybe one day they’ll change how they love on another. And, baby, I understand how you thought that I might only want to make love to you and not be made love to. I get that. I’m just telling you, don’t worry about it and if ever you feel like you want to try it, I’m more than happy to let you. Hell, I’d love it. With your curiosity and enthusiasm, I think it would be a mind-blowing experience.”

“Just your mind?” Min teased, gently poking humour. “I liked doing it to other things too.”

“Oh that’s bad.” Se7en muttered, narrowing his eyes. “I think, that is so horrible, you should be punished for it.”

“Oh?” Min lifted an eyebrow, tilting his chin up in challenge. “What did you have in mind?”

“I was thinking,” Se7en kissed him soundly before pulling himself off the bed, grabbing a pair of sweats to pull on. “That you’re going to have to choke down my cooking...instead of other things that I think I’d prefer you to swallow. Come on, Minku. I’m hungry and you are going to need to keep your strength up. Can’t have you wasting away when I’ve got plans for you and that delicious body of yours.”

# 29

The pounding syncopated beat of Crazy shook back stage, Changmin standing by the curtains, hidden from view. Yunho and Jaejoong were lost somewhere by the green room, held captive by a Japanese singer that they both worshipped. Peeking out around the flowing material hiding the side stage, Min stared out into the audience, seeing a blur of faces and lights clapping loudly for the man he called his lover.

He was still getting used to the way Japanese audiences reacted to singers and bands on stage. The sometimes eerie silence was a sign of appreciation he reminded himself but still his nervousness increased every second there wasn't a response from the audience.

So long as there isn't any fruit being thrown, I shouldn't care. Changmin grinned. Although I could use some fruit right now. Or better yet, some quiet time alone with Se7en.

That would be a long time coming, he sighed. There was a party scheduled for after the show, a mini-concert to highlight different YG talents. The SM boys were invited as a show of Korean support but the company executives circled the back stage once and then disappeared, having shown face long enough to not be rude if asked after.

"He's nice to watch." Yoochun shouted into Changmin's ear, keeping his head ducked down so the other man could hear. "He's almost done."

The music broke into a smattering of loud applause, screaming rising from the mostly female audience. Bowling, Se7en lifted his fists into the air, an energetic bounce to his step as he ran from the stage. One of the tour's assistants was waiting for him, a towel and bottle of cold water in her hands. Sweaty and gasping from dancing, the singer bent over, catching his breath as the next group rushed past him, patting him on the back before heading out to do their numbers.

Laughing, Se7en accepted the towel and the congratulations, his eyes never straying far from the tight group of people around him. It was as if Min didn't exist.

Changmin's heart twisted when Se7en didn't look at him even though he walked right by. The secrets they had from the world were going to hurt. He knew that. He'd conditioned himself to expect it.

He just didn't know being ignored could be so painful.

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“You’re lucky that you love Junsu.” Changmin said to Yoochun as they left the side stage, forcing himself not to stare at Se7en’s sweat-dewed arms and neck, his chest clearly outlined under his drenched shirt. “You can touch him all you want and no one says anything.”

“Well, not all I want.” Yoochun replied with a sly smile. “I’m sure there are some ways that it would be very bad for us. I save that for when we’re in bed.”

Min moved slowly through the people lining the outer hallway, the oppressive heat making his head ache. He soon lost Yoochun to Junsu’s loud shout, calling the other man over to talk to someone they both knew. The baritone attempted to pull Min with him but the younger man refused, begging off in the hopes of finding some fresh air.

Nodding to a bouncer holding the back door of the auditorium open, Min had his credentials checked again once he reached the roped off alley way leading to the enormous tents set up outside for the after-party. People were already clustered under the high-roofed canvas shelters, glasses clinking and loud laughter greeting Min in a wave of sound as he entered.

Snagging a cold bottle of sparkling water from the bar, he sought out a quiet back corner, turning his cell phone on so the other members would be able to reach him when it was time to go. A small cluster of armchairs dotted various spots in the tents, arranged for quieter conversations and away from the milling crowds that would be filling the area once the show was complete. Min gratefully sank into a chair, pulling a low ottoman over to hook his feet onto. His palm notebook held a few e-books he’d not finished and given the others’ prevalence for staying at parties until late, he thought he might as well catch up on some reading before he either got bored and took a taxi home or one of the others wanted to go home.

He’d already weathered a few disparaging remarks from an older singer, the middle-aged woman muttering loudly about the Korean invasion that was ruining their market. He’d wanted to respond in Japanese, thinking she didn’t know he was relatively fluent in the language but the cunning glint in her eye and the sly smile on her tissue-white face told him that she knew exactly what she was doing.

Her companion, a studio executive, came to his defense. Thankfully for her, Jaejoong hadn’t overheard the remark. Their oldest had little patience for bigotry and used his reputation as a stargazer to his advantage, often crossing over social boundaries with an elegant fumbling people seemed to pardon. Min knew he would never get away with one-third of the things Jae did. Yunho thought he could accomplish even less, perhaps one-tenth. Junsu, they both figured, possibly would be forgiven out of sheer cuteness and in fear of his delivering a bad pun to smooth over the ruffled feathers he might have caused.

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Yoochun claimed ignorance and spoke his Konglish to confuse them all.

Changmin was on his third bottle of water and debating finding a bathroom when his cell phone buzzed at his hip. Too early for one of the members to be tired, he thought, answering the call.

“Hey, Minku.” Se7en purred. “Where are you, sexy?”

“In the tents.” Changmin looked around, seeing the main floor had filled in somewhat, blocking his view of the entrance. “Where are you?”

“Just finishing up with a few people from the company.” The clatter of different voices grew louder around Se7en. “I had to take a shower and then got pulled into some PR work. I wish you were here.”

“Can’t, remember?” Min tried to keep his voice light but he heard the creep of resentment underneath his words. “It’s harder than I thought it would be. It hurt when you walked by me.”

“It was hard to walk by you too.” Se7en admitted. “I wanted to grab you and kiss that gorgeous mouth of yours when I got off stage. I was already having a hard time not staring at your legs in those black jeans. God, and when you turned around, the view of your ass just about killed me. I’m pretty sure they thought I was going to faint.”

“You’re silly.” He murmured, the heaviness in his heart lifted by Se7en’s words. “And if you keep talking like that, someone around you is going to hear and you’ll be answering a lot of questions.”

“I’m too tired and missing my Minku to care.” The older man said. “I see Yunho. How about if I tell him I’m going to kidnap you and you go to the parking area? My driver’s there. He’ll let you in the car and then come get me. We can escape to some place dirtier and crass.”

“We’re at a music industry party.” He reminded Se7en. “Can it get dirtier and crasser than that?”

“True.” The man agreed. “So, you’ll do it?”

“Yeah, I hope I recognize your town car. I don’t think I remember your driver’s face.”

“Don’t worry. Look for the one made out of stone and that’s him. I’ll call him to tell him to be on the look out for you.” Se7en reassured him. “He likes you. He thinks you’re too good for me.”

“Did he tell you that?”

“Nope, but I can tell.” Se7en laughed. “He calls you Shim-san. He still very formally calls me sir and he’s worked for me for two years.”



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Changmin shed the jacket nearly as soon as he settled into the town car's leather seats, breathing a sigh of relief as he unbuttoned the top few closures of his shirt. The driver nodded respectfully at the young man before closing the door, informing Changmin that he'd stocked the wet bar with iced green tea and pomegranate juice.

The car was moving as Min uncapped a bottle of tea, the tinted windows hiding him from outside view. It took fifteen minutes for security to back the crowd of onlookers away from the side street, the car weaving effortlessly through throngs of people and eventually arriving at the back stage door where fans were held back by police and wooden barricades.

Flashes went off as Se7en exited the building, his winning smile wide and thankful for the people shouting his name as he left. Giving one last wave, the man tucked his head down and slid over next to Min, the driver shutting the door tight behind him.

"Hey, baby." Se7en bent slightly forward, cupping Changmin's face and stealing a kiss.

Changmin wasn't prepared for the deep taking of his mouth, the older man's kiss tasting of cloves and a hint of white wine. His breath was short by the time Se7en was done, the sting of the older man's teeth along his pout leaving light imprints behind.

"Are we going to your apartment?" Min breathed in Se7en's scent, his fingers wrapped tight in his lover's shirt. He pulled down the t-shirt slightly, kissing at the hollow of the older man's collarbone.

"I thought we'd go have some dinner or maybe..." Se7en's phone rang, the device trapped between their pressed in bodies. Sighing, he pulled it out, brushing a light peck on Min's upper lip before answering.

"Hello?" The older man's voice changed, become more husky and rough. Listening for a moment, he bit his lip, his eyes growing more resigned as the caller spoke. "No, I'm already heading home. I've got a headache. I don't feel like dealing with people right now."

Min heard a squawking from the headset, a woman's voice urging him to change his mind. Digging out his e-book reader, Changmin tapped out a message for Se7en to read. "If you want to go, you can."

Se7en's violent shake of his head left Min with no doubt that attending a party was the last thing that Se7en wanted to do. Holding up his hand to stop Min from making any further protests, Se7en returned his attention to the phone.

"Nope. Don't feel like it." He repeated. "Look, I did the concert. I hung around for a bit afterwards. Now I'm going home. Sure, you go look into my

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contract. I'm scheduled to do three public relations events for the company for the first quarter. I've already done them."

"Every thing else that I do is a bonus on your end and good business on mine." Se7en's friendly face grew stern, all his playful goofiness fleeing under the cross of his brow. "I don't need you to tell me how to run my business. I *am* my business. No one looks out for me but me. If you have a problem with that or with working with me, I can find another PR manager."

"Good. No, there's not going to be a problem." His tone softened. "I just need you to understand that I know my limits and what I want to do. If I say I don't feel like doing something, it's because I know I'll do more damage to my reputation or my credibility by either being too tired to deal with questions or too impatient to deal with idiots. I don't want to come off like that to people who are interviewing me or expecting me to perform."

"Good, so long as you understand that." Se7en pulled Min over onto his lap, rubbing at the younger man's hip with his fingers. "I'll call you tomorrow morning to get my event schedule. See if you can work some events around my travel arrangements with Kano. He's got my concerts and interviews lined up for the next month already. I've got some days blacked out for personal time but the rest should be free."

Signing off, Se7en closed his phone and put it into the pocket of his discarded hoodie, wrapping his arms around Min's waist. Changmin leaned back in the embrace, staring at the man he thought he knew. There was more beneath the surface than he'd initially given Se7en credit for and the surprise was a welcome shock to his system.

"That was your manager?"

"My PR manager. She's new. I promoted my old one to be my studio assistant. She wanted to work more with the music end and she's good at it." He shrugged. "This one's only been with me for a couple of weeks and I think someone at the company told her to try to herd me into more things."

"Ah, things are so different for us." Min sighed. "We go where we go and do what we're told. Although Yunnie-ah does push back sometimes. It depends. Sometimes things don't make a lot of sense."

"After your initial contracts go out, it'll be different." Se7en said. "Trust me, the five of you have gotten a wide audience. They'll want to keep you happy or at least make sure you've got some more down time. You guys work insanely."

"We want to be the best." Changmin nodded. "Market saturation."

"You have that." Se7en nodded. "And it's good that the company is behind you. That's usually a battle for new groups. The Dong Bang boys are

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sometimes a bit scary for other groups. You're kind of known to be stubborn."

"And you still hit on me?"

"Are you kidding?" Se7en slapped Min's butt. "Have you seen this ass? It's gorgeous."

"Sir," The intercom carried the driver's voice into the back cab. "Shall I take you home? Or to another destination?"

"I have an idea." Se7en's smile was a wicked one. "Let's you and I go do karaoke."

"Are you serious?" Min lifted his eyebrows. "You want to go singing after tonight?"

"Sure, we can drink some beer. Get drunk. I can molest you at a love hotel." The older man kissed Min's shocked mouth. "What? Love motels can be very erotic. If you get one that changes the sheets in between clients."

"Sir, I would recommend against straining the young master's voice. Shim-san shouldn't take unnecessary risks." Min covered his mouth as the driver interrupted Se7en's rambling suggestion. "Might I say a good dinner would be in order?"

"I told you he liked you better than me." The older man shrugged. "Is there someplace private that you know of? Someplace nice."

"I wouldn't take Shim-san to a noodle bar, if that is what you're implying, sir." The car made a right turn, gliding onto one of Tokyo's many causeways. "I know a place that is private, out of the way and serves good food. I can take you back to your apartment afterwards. And drop the young man off at his."

"Chances are, Shim-san is going to be staying at my home tonight." Se7en looked to Min. "Do you want to try it? The place to eat. Not my apartment. Although we've got to try out a few more flat surfaces there too."

"It sounds like a plan." Changmin bit lightly at the end of Se7en's nose. "Although if we stuck to the bed later, I wouldn't mind. I have a thing about leaving kitchen counters just for food."

"Good then. It won't take more than a few minutes to get there." The man's deep voice rumbled through the speaker. "If you could possibly contain yourself for that long, sir, the young man will be able to leave the vehicle without having to redress. I'm sure he'd appreciate it. And I, for one, would be pleasantly surprised to discover that you have some amount of self-control."

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# 30

There was a spot on Min's neck that held a sip of wine. Unerringly, Se7en found it, a dip of flesh where Min's neck muscles joined to the column of his throat. Carefully, Se7en tilted his glass and poured the right amount of cabernet to fill it, his hand pressed hard against Min's stomach to prevent the younger man from jerking at the shock of the cold wine.

"Stay still for me, baby." He murmured, licking at a stray drop along the rim of his glass. The leaded crystal sang with the touch of his tongue. Its bell tone struck Min's soul, as pure as Se7en's kisses. "Let me lick this clean."

The price of the wine was worth every penny. The container he lapped it from was a treasure beyond imagining.

Sweet on his tongue, the honey of Min's skin adding a delectable undertone to the potency of the wine. As he sucked on the last of the drops gathered in the hollow, Se7en stroked along the ridge of Min's belly button, dipping his wine-wet finger into the shadowed hole.

"Shichi." Min mewled, drawing out the word, his hands clenched at his sides. "That's too.. much."

Se7en's tongue strayed up onto a tendon cord running around the hollow, his teeth following the strong line of Min's neck and back down again, suckling at the spot he'd left still tasting faintly of wine. The fingers of his free hand found the rim of his glass, wetting the tips and drew a line over Min's chest, circling one nipple with a fragrant crimson trail.

Red drops glistened on Min's pale skin, the wine pooling around an areole. The older man moved to lick at Changmin's nipple, touching briefly on the peak with the tip of his tongue before suckling the area clean. Underneath the skin ran a flare of heat and Se7en chased Min's blush over the rise of his chest muscle and down to the ridges of the younger man's rib cage.

"This is nice." The older man murmured as he kissed along the length of Min's torso. "Nicer than dinner even. And that's saying a lot. Because dinner on your mouth was nearly as good as sex. I imagine making love to you would wipe it clean from my mind though. I'll have to keep trying to compare the two. I'll need lots of help with that, Minku."

Most of Se7en's dinner had come from bites placed on Min's mouth, the older man feeding his lover then taking half back with a ravenous kiss, slices



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of thin beef sheared between their clenched teeth. Nibbles of cheesecake were shared the same way, the restaurant's secluded individual dining rooms set up for privacy and romance.

Thinking back on the meal, Se7en thought he might have to give his driver a raise for arranging their meal there. At the very least, an extremely generous present.

Back in the safety of his apartment, Se7en opened a bottle of cabernet sauvignon and poured them each a glass. Seeing the young man sip the blood red liquid from the crystal rim gave Se7en ideas. Ideas that were easily acted upon once a few words of persuasion were whispered into Min's ear. Min now lay on the broad chaise in his living area, the lights dimmed except for the track lighting above the lounge, splashes of gold-white highlighting their half-naked bodies.

"This isn't fair." Changmin whispered. "Shouldn't I get the chance to do this to you?"

"You always do this to me." Se7en murmured back, taking little small nips of his lover's skin until he reached Min's mouth. "And seduction isn't always fair, Minku."

Min contemplated Se7en's words. Seduction wasn't always fair, he thought. Well, he supposed that was true.

With that thought, Changmin unbuttoned the top of Se7en's jeans and slid down the metal zipper's tab. Forcing his fingers down past the other man's underwear, Min stroked at the growing length of Se7en's sex, circling the base before rubbing down along the thick vein curving up around the shaft.

"I thought I told you to stay still." The singer breathed hard between clenched teeth, trying to regain his composure.

"Yeah, I changed my mind about that." Changmin purred. "I need to feel you on my hand. I wanted to see how hard I could make you and feel your wetness on my palm."

He tried not to let the thrill of what he could do to Se7en affect him but it did. And he was even more proud of the cocky self-confidence resonating in his voice. Well, as proud as he could be until Se7en's fingers pinched at one of his nipples and his teeth made short work of the other.

"Baby, that hand of yours is really tight." Gasping, Se7en pulled slightly away, his mouth panting with exertion. "Not that I mind, it's just very hard to concentrate."

"And you think what you're doing makes easy for me to think?" Min bent his head slightly, letting his tongue trace Se7en's upper lip. "I want you. I want to have you in my mouth again. I've missed your taste."

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"I can easily arrange that." Se7en murmured into the kiss, their words tangled around their touching tongues.

He lifted his own hips, stripping his loosened jeans free and kicking them to the floor. Min's pants followed, a puddle of grey and black denim pooled onto the floor. Stretching over his young lover's lean body, Se7en cradled the back of Min's head, lowering his mouth down over Changmin's.

His kiss tasted of wine and sex, Min thought. Is this what sin tastes like?

"Turn over." Se7en urged his lover, working his hand under Min's rear to guide him along. Changmin slid over and turned onto his belly, his arms loose around the chaise's thickly upholstered edge. "And stay there. Don't move. I'll be right back."

A rush of cold air moved in where Se7en's warm body had been, leaving Min with a shiver down his spine. Se7en was back before he could adjust to the change in temperature, the man's heat sliding over his legs and shoulders. He felt the chill of a lubricant tube slide down against his ribs. Eyes widening, Changmin twisted his shoulders around, looking up at Se7en's sensual face. The older man kissed him on the mouth, reassuring and warm, calming the tremors filling his belly.

"If you're not ready for this, we're not going to do it." Se7en said softly. "I'm fine continuing to do what we've been doing. Hell, I can't think of anything else I'd like to have in my mouth but you."

"Please." Min whispered, offering his mouth up for Se7en's kiss. "I want to do...anything. Everything."

"We're still going to take this slow, baby." The man kissed Min's shoulder. "Just relax."

Se7en's hands roamed over Min's body, stroking at the base of his spine. Telling the young man to lift his rear up, he placed a firm pillow under Min's belly, lifting his hips up. Se7en licked down the line of Min's back, slowly working his way down until he crested over the firm globes of the young man's rear.

The rubbing over his body was driving Changmin insane and he could barely keep his legs from moving. Se7en's hands pressed against the inside of his knees, gently forcing his legs apart and leaving him open. The older man stared down at his lover's displayed body, unable to resist roughly moving his palm up Min's thigh and over his torso until he reached the younger man's shoulders.

He'd expected fingers. At least the rough push of a tip into him. Changmin nearly jumped out of his skin when Se7en's tongue licked at the edge of his opening, then the shocking nip of teeth just around the rim.

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Gasping, his body clenched, instinct taking over, closing the aching hole from Se7en's intrusion.

"Let go, honey. Let me do this for you." Se7en's hands were pressing against his rear, opening him back up. "Just let go. I want to watch that mouth of yours pant for the taste of me on your tongue."

Long fingers invaded the tight cleft, parting him. Cold air hit Min again, a rush of chill against the hot pout of his body. He forced himself to lay into the chaise's softness, feeling every stretch of fabric against his taut body.

The touch of Se7en's tongue made him jump, the wetness and softness so unlike the man's fingers. Moist and hot, the older man's licking increased then slowed, catching along the rim of Min's hole and playing at the skin around it. His hands were moving around Min's sac, straying upwards to caress the younger man's shaft.

He continued to kiss at Min's entrance, digging past the ring of muscle and laving deep. Gasping, Min clutched at the chaise's corners, tilting his hips up and moaning. He could hear himself begging for Se7en to give him more, his voice a faint echo in his own ears.

Changmin no longer cared what he sounded like. Min needed Se7en inside of him, any part of his lover to reach in and stroke at the desire filling his emptiness with more need. Twisting under Se7en's tongue, Min wondered how something could increase his want yet still feel as if he was nothing more than a void.

The plunge of Se7en's tongue deep into his body drove that thought clear from his mind, a lightning wave of desire rocking his body around Se7en's hot mouth.

Steel hard, Min's sex jerked in Se7en's hand, its head expanding when the man's palm moved over its tip. Min hissed at the sensations running through his cock, culminating down to the root where Se7en's fingers followed the line of his body, the tips dipping around Se7en's tongue.

"Can't think, Shichi." Changmin's murmurs were a mix of Korean and Japanese, his language skills blurred in his overwrought mind. "I need you. Inside of me. Please, Shichi. Please."

"Open the lube for me, Minku." He kissed the small of Min's back, biting at the young man's rear. "Help me make you ready."

He fumbled to find the tube of gel, his fingers trembling when he closed over onto the plastic container. Moving, Min nearly tumbled from the side of the chaise, caught by Se7en's strong hand. Concentrating on getting the lid open, Min propped himself up onto his elbows, a relieved sigh escaping him when he heard the click of the lid giving way.

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“Just squeeze some of it out.” Se7en’s fingers trailed over his cheek, then cupped his hand under the tube.

His body shaking, trapped under Se7en’s heavier frame, Min pressed down at the tube, pouring a generous amount of lube onto his lover’s fingers. Emboldened by the intimacy, Changmin lightly ran his tongue along the inside of Se7en’s wrist, licking at the other man’s pulse point.

“God, you look so good doing that.” The man kissed Min’s ear, the hardness of his cock nested between the pressed in globes of his young lover’s rear. “I love watching you kiss me.”

“Hell, there isn’t anything that I don’t love watching you do.” Se7en murmured softly, laying his mouth on Min’s.

The first touch of Se7en’s fingers against him were welcome, a throbbing ache deep inside of Min needing to feel Se7en’s caresses. As the tip of one finger slid in, Se7en’s other hand reached under Min, starting long strokes at the young man, his hand rubbing up to catch some of the excess oil.

“More, Shichi.” Min begged, his hips moving back to meet Se7en’s fingers. “I need more. I want more.”

Se7en went deeper still, stretching the young man apart with a gentle circular motion. He remembered his first time lying under another man and the tearing of his body as he struggled to take in his new lover. Se7en knew he would do anything he could to avoid giving that experience to the man he called baby, even if it meant never knowing the sweetness of Min’s body on his sex.

Min’s pleas brought a warm smile to Se7en’s wide mouth, the young man’s hips moving erotically under him. He worked another finger past the tightness of Min’s entrance, sliding deep inside and finding the burl of nerves hidden there. Changmin’s body clenched in on itself, nearly curling under Se7en’s weight, the younger man’s mouth gasping while he tried to find enough oxygen in the air for his lungs.

Se7en’ brushed his shaft along the inside of Min’s thigh, letting the moistened tip leave a trail along his lover’s leg. Changmin pushed his legs together trapping Se7en there then released him. The younger man felt a thrill of power when Se7en’s sex trembled against his legs, knowing he affected the older man as much as he was turned on by Se7en’s touch.

Min sighed as another jolt overtook his mind, cleansing any worries about Se7en needing him. His lover was right. Seduction wasn’t always fair. Especially when your lover knew what to do to make your body break apart into small sparks and you wanted to let him do it.

But it was turning out to be so much fun.

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“Are you ready for me, Minnie-ah?” Se7en leaned forward, resting his chin on his lover’s shoulders. “Are you wanting to do this? Because I am more than ready for you. I think I’ve been ready to have you around me for a very long time.”

# 31

“Yes,” Changmin breathed out, his voice heavy and thick. “I’m ready for you. I want you. Please, Shichi.”

Se7en’s face softened, his affection for Min blooming under the light of the other man’s smile. Nuzzling Min’s neck, he bit lightly, marking him as his own. Sliding his fingers free of Min’s body, Se7en reached for his lover’s hand, pulling him from the chaise.

“Come with me, Minku.” He said. “The first time I have you, I want you on a bed. You deserve that. Not some hurried sex on a couch.”

“I was happy with some hurried sex on a couch.” Min muttered, reaching to grab the lube container before they went too far.

“Silly boy.” Se7en held Min’s hand, guiding him into the bedroom. “Beds have nice linen sheets. Chaises are upholstered with rough tapestry that will leave very nasty burns on that delicate skin of yours. I’m going to be in enough trouble with you. I don’t want to have to explain to the Dong Bang hit squad about the marks on your body.”

Min stalled, dragging his feet so Se7en was forced to look at him. As the older man turned, he smiled coyly. “I thought you said we were going to leave them out of your bedroom?”

“Baby, when you’re in it, it’s our bedroom.” Se7en grabbed at his lover’s waist, pulling him into the bed and onto the mattress.

The city’s lights bleached the sky to a pearl grey, faint specks of stars visible on the far horizon. Far off across the wide canal, the surrounding buildings shone square panes of yellow and white, providing enough light for the couple to see one another.

In Min’s eyes, the bed stretched out around him, lengths of mattress he couldn’t touch the edges of, even if he spread his arms out as far as he could. Se7en’s scent clung to the sheets, familiar and erotic, a blend of soap and man that made him harder with every breath he took in.

He would never be able to smell star anise without thinking of his first lover, Min realized. And neither would he ever forget the care his lover gave him.

“Lift your face up, baby.” Se7en crawled up the bed, stopping only long enough to run his hand under Min’s shin and kiss the curve of his knee. His

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mouth drove Changmin wild as it journeyed up over his flesh, circling once around the head of his sex then taking in the length, a warm wetness cradling his heat.

Sucking Min deep, Se7en stroked at his lover's belly, working his fingers under Min's hips and slowly around the already moistened entrance. Changmin's body knew what was needed, lifting to allow the older man access and spreading his knees apart. His mind was too busy embroiled in the waves of lust cresting and breaking around him.

Se7en raised his eyes, watching Changmin's face as he swallowed Min's shaft, closing his throat down over the silken head. Working back up the hard length, he moaned around Changmin, letting the rhythm of his voice reverberate through the shaft's width.

Min reached for his lover, clenching his fingers deep into the broad span of Se7en's shoulders. He shifted, intending to turn and lick at Se7en's sex but the other man pressed down on his hips, silently ordering him to stay on his back. Another suckle nearly drove Min over the edge, his hips writhing wildly under Se7en's mouth.

When his lover tested the rim of his entrance, Min fought not to scream.

When Se7en's tongue found the crenulated pout and moistened it with a long kiss, Min lost the fight and tilted his head back, his voice a guttural nonsensical moan of Se7en's name and desire.

"Do you like that, baby?" Se7en licked again, driving his tongue in deeper. Somewhere in Min's pleas were an acquiescence to Se7en's loving him. He debated using his fingers, but the pulsating rocking of Min's body told him the younger man wouldn't last much longer if he did. Changmin was at the brink of falling over the edge of his arousal and spilling into Se7en's mouth.

While delicious, Se7en had other ideas in how to bring his lover to pleasure.

It felt wonderful to have Min quivering at the tip of his tongue. It blew Se7en's mind to think how hot and velvety the young man would feel around his sex.

"Can you turn over for me, Minku?" The word was special, spoken in a whisper between them. It said so many things; baby, lover, and friend. Min never knew the power of a word until it was spoken by Se7en's sensual mouth.

Changmin shook as he tried to move, his legs unwilling or unable to support him turning. Pulling down one of the soft pillows for Min to rest his stomach on, he stroked at his lover's side, coaxing him into relaxing. Carefully, Se7en gripped Min's hips, shifting his body with gentle motions,

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kissing the younger man's hip bones and laving down the cleft of his rear. Min's voice grew hoarse, his words no longer clear except for a string of nonsensical murmurings, begging Se7en not to stop.

Se7en had no intention of stopping. Unless he heard the word no or sensed pain in Min's voice.

He would kill himself before he forced pain into his young lover's body. And he would come up with something more dreadful if that pain made its way into Min's soul.

"Shichi," Min's hips moved, rubbing his stiffened shaft against the bed sheets. "I...need..."

Se7en kissed the small of his lover's back, a promise of more to come.

He tore open the condom wrapper, working the latex down over his cock until the thick white ring lay snug against the root. Feeling at the slickness of the condom, Se7en frowned, worrying that the oil on its surface wouldn't be enough to ease the way into his lover's hole.

Grabbing the lubricant, he undid the lid and poured a liberal amount of the gel over his shaft, rubbing it around until he was satisfied of its coating. Looking down at his lover's prone body, Se7en couldn't believe that what he saw made him even harder, the skin on his sex nearly wanting to burst under the rush of blood pouring into him.

"You know what baby?" Se7en murmured into Min's ear.

"No stopping." Changmin ordered, a rough promise of violence if the man was offering to withdraw his affections. "More. Now."

"I'll give you more." There was a wicked dark laugh, erotic pleasures caught in Se7en's chuckle. "I just wanted to say that I've changed my mind. I want to see your face when I enter you. I want to watch you when I fill you."

Changmin shifted his body, nearly weeping with ache as his sex brushed along Se7en's stomach. He no longer cared how he was taken, as long as Se7en's hardness touched at the burning throb inside of him. His mouth was in touch with his brain, his thoughts scattered like so many fallen leaves on the wind. If he survived this night, it would mean having to stitch himself back together after breaking apart under the pounding thrusts of his lover's hips.

And Min wanted that more than anything else.

Min felt his legs being lifted, his shins resting against Se7en's shoulders. With his back pressed against the soft mattress, he felt both trapped and open, his hole gaping in preparation for his lover's entrance. His own sex was caught against his stomach, a pearled drop of pre-cum spilling from the



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slit and onto his stomach. Bending over, Se7en lapped it up, taking one last taste of his lover's seed before shifting his hips and gripping his shaft.

"Relax, honey." Se7en whispered, staring down into Min's hooded eyes. "And if it's too much..."

"I want this." Changmin raised one hand, touching his lover's chest, running his palm over Se7en's nipple. He let his fingers wander over the hard nub, scraping lightly underneath it with his nails. He loved watching Se7en's face turn sensual for him. Not the fake seduction for a camera but a true erotic display of want and need starting with the darkening of his whiskey-tinted eyes to the part of his mouth. Min wanted Se7en to show him everything.

"Yours, Dong-Wook. Make me yours." Whispering, not trusting himself to speak out loud, Min said, "I want to be yours."

Se7en didn't need anything more than the look on Min's face. There was so much trust there, the younger man falling back into his desire and leaving himself open for Se7en's pleasure. It would be only right for the older man to give some of it back.

He started slow, working the tip of himself into Min's entrance. Gasping, the young man writhed, grabbing at the sheets and wrapping them around his hands. Looking down at his lover's reactions, Se7en nearly pulled free, stopping when Min shook his head from side to side.

"No, need you." Changmin pleaded, his voice cracking under the strain of his ache. "So much of you. Just need you."

"I'm going to go slow, Minku." Se7en promised, holding himself steady and pushing forward, urging the younger man to force down to open up. It took a while until Changmin relaxed enough for Se7en to continue, the young singer's inner ring tightening involuntarily around the intruding tip.

Min hissed, breathing in through his clenched teeth as Se7en pushed into him. The older man's fingers were moving slowly over the tip of Min's sex, stroking him with long tender caresses and pulling the feelings of want up from his guts. His body stretched, the rings opening up under the incessant pressure.

There was pain, a minor sharp spike of his body's muscles rejecting Se7en's patient thrust. Schooling himself, Min forced his entrance to relax, bearing down and panting, his long legs tight as his muscles strained to lift his hips up for Se7en.

"Don't worry, honey. I've got you." Se7en's hand moved, rubbing Min's shaft against the young man's stomach. Carefully, he pushed in again, feeling the head of his sex slide past the tight inner ring and into the hot moist warmth of his lover's body.

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Se7en knew he could die a happy man in the next moment and have no regrets about his life.

“Touch yourself for me, Minku.” He murmured, drawing Min’s hand around the young man’s hard sex. “I want to see how sweet you look.”

“Shichi.” Min strained against Se7en’s hips, trying to work more of the man into his body. “I want this. I want you.”

Gripping under Min’s thighs, Se7en canted his body into his lover, working slowly into the young man. Another inch buried past the tight entrance, his shaft nearly hurting from holding back. Changmin’s moans were louder, rising and falling as he pulled on his own sex, rubbing his thumb over the tip. His moving hips twisted a hot sleeve of moistness around Se7en’s partially embedded cock, nearly making the older man weep with pleasure.

It took too long for Min’s liking but each inch pushed into him meant another half being drawn back out until he became used to Se7en’s thrusting sex. Groaning, he arched his back when Se7en’s crotch finally hit the back of his rear, the older man stilling his movements to let Min get used to the feel of being penetrated.

Every desire he’d ever had for Se7en broke apart and expanded into Min’s awareness. He was conscious of every small thing he loved about the older man; from his cockiness to the gentle teasing seduction he plied on Changmin’s existence. The press of Se7en against the walls of his body felt good. As Se7en’s shaft reached up into his guts, Min felt the emptiness he’d been carrying around inside of him filled to the brim. His lover’s shaft pushed him open and apart, the weight of Se7en’s hips against his was a comfort, a connection between their bodies that Changmin enjoyed.

Then Se7en moved and the thoughts he had in his mind exploded into a sea of stars.

Changmin felt the rush of sensations when Se7en’s fingers explored his depths. Now fully engorged, Se7en’s shaft struck the core of Min’s sexuality, moving across the tiny button with each long stroke.

Min knew he was going to die before it was over.

He also half-wondered if he would even care.

The pace picked up and Min heard himself moaning, his fingers gripping around his own sex then Se7en’s hand covering his, slowly pulling alongside of his own strokes. As Se7en’s sex buried in deep, Min’s hips lifted up from the bed, rising to meet his lover’s thrusts.

It was a second of forever and then the building sensation started in the roll of his sac, Min’s balls tightening up against the hollow of his thighs. His breathing grew more erratic, harsh panting shuddering his slender frame as

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Se7en continued to pound into him, stretching him farther apart with each push.

Changmin gave in to the wave, falling into the sensations crawling over his nerves and skin. The world turned red under his closed lids, the rush of his body's release tightening his clenched rear around his lover's cock. Se7en groaned, losing his concentration under the press of the young man's body.

Nearly breathless, Se7en leaned forward to kiss Min, trapping the young man's spurting sex between their stomachs and pushing up a few final before he felt his seed building up inside of him.

"Need to come in you, baby." Se7en whispered, his mouth hot against Min's neck. "Hold onto me."

Changmin wrapped his arms around Se7en's shoulders, rocking into the nearly violent thrusts of Se7en's release. He felt the rush of hot seed fill the end of the condom, a welcome burn that he ached to have spread into his body. Min bit down into the tender skin of Se7en's shoulder, his body rocking once more into a spill of cum between their seed-slickened bodies.

With Min gasping for breath, Se7en slid his lover's thighs down, drawing himself out of Min's warmth. Quickly disposing of the condom, he returned to the bed and reaching for the young man's waist, turning Changmin over to lie on his side to face him. His hands rested on the younger man's hips, stroking away the tremors of Min's shuddering body. Cradling Changmin in his arms, Se7en kissed at his lover's mouth, taking great care to nibble on the edges and lave at the young man's strong jaw.

"Love you, Minku." Se7en whispered, breathing his affection into Min's open mouth.

Changmin raised his hand to Se7en's face, brushing trembling fingers along the older man's mouth. Sighing, he rested his head into the hollow of the man's throat, breathing in the scent of their mingled bodies. Laying there, he heard Se7en's heart, a strong beat he'd set into deep motion. The echoing refrain beat for him, Min realized. That sound in Se7en's chest was his as were the murmured words of love he heard in Se7en's rumbling, sexy voice.

"I love you too, Shichi." Changmin replied, rubbing his cheek against his lover's chest. "Thank you for being my lover."

"Ah, Minku, that's my pleasure." Se7en kissed the top of Min's head.

"No, Dong-Wook." Min disagreed with a lazy shake of his head. Sleep was taking him over, fatigue dragging down his eyelids. "You're my pleasure and my love. And I wouldn't have it any other way."

# 32

Se7en woke to the breathing of another man beside him. He lay on the bed, listening to Min's body, his eyes closed as the world moved around them. He could sense that it was still dark, the night still clinging to the city's buildings. Changmin's warmth felt good on the sheets, seeping from the young man's naked body and into Se7en's nude form.

He turned over onto his side, his hand skimming an inch of Min's face. Se7en didn't want to wake his lover but needed to feel the heat of Min's breath on his palm. The young man's face held more of an innocence to it than when his soulful brown eyes were open. Se7en missed the window into Min's soul, the wisdom he found there and the calm but the purity of his lover's heart shone best when Min didn't know he was being watched.

Or was asleep.

Se7en ached to kiss the tilt on Min's chin, a triangular path leading to his pout. He nearly fell apart when Min shifted, his hand brushing against Se7en's bare belly. A corner of the sheet covered Min's waist, a darkened purple bite forming on the rise of Min's hip bone.

He left that mark there, Se7en realized. Those were his teeth prints along the golden blush of Min's skin.

The enormity of what he'd done and who he'd done it with hit Se7en. Staring down at his lover, Se7en exhaled hard, pushing the air from his stomach and finding the ache he'd carried with him seeping from his nerves.

"Look what you've done to me, Minku." He whispered. "You've turned my life upside down. I can't think any more without wondering how you are. I watch people as they pass by and I think to myself, what kind of lives to they have? And I wonder if you've already seen them and would I be running over stories with ones that you've made if I make one of my own?"

Min murmured in his sleep, turning his face towards his lover's voice. Even in his dreams, Se7en's words called to him. Risking everything, Se7en bent over to kiss the soft pout of Min's lower lip, tasting their mingled scents on his skin.

A tiny moan crept from Min's throat, his mouth parting when Se7en touched him.

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He loved the sounds Min made, asleep or awake. Although, pulling the sheet from his lover's youthful body, awake was much more interesting.

There were more bites along Changmin's hips, rising bruises looking like butterflies resting beneath the skin. Leaning over, Se7en kissed one he'd left along the cut of Min's stomach muscles, the young man's belly flexing at the touch. Changmin stirred again, his long legs shifting across the sheets, knees parting as Se7en eased his hand over Min's thigh, supple fingers touching at the velvety skin he'd kissed earlier that evening.

Swallowing, Se7en let his held in breath puff his cheeks, wanting another taste of the young man against the roof of his mouth. Licking at the dryness on his lips, Se7en bent his head, ready to suckle at the tip of Min's sex when his cell phone chirruped from the night stand.

Swearing softly, the older man grabbed at the cell, flipping it open to stop the ringing from waking his lover. Glancing at Min, Se7en turned around, keeping his voice down as he whispered into the phone.

"Hello?"

"Minnie-ah?" The voice was Korean, silken and husky. Jaejoong, Se7en thought. Then with a cant of his head, the older man wondered why the group's chaotic singer was calling before dawn. And on his phone.

"Joongie-ah," Se7en whispered. "Is there something wrong? Why are you calling Min on my phone?"

"This is Minnie-ah's number, Choi." Jaejoong corrected. Pulling the phone away from his ear, Se7en winced, realizing he was holding his lover's cell. "I was calling him to tell him that we were home. He wanted to know if we made it home safe. Is he around?"

"He's asleep." Se7en glanced guiltily at his lover. "Do you want me to wake him up?"

"No, please don't." Jaejoong replied. "He sleeps hard. It might take you forever to rouse him. Just tell him that we're home and not worry."

"Of course if he's asleep," The singer mused. "He couldn't have been too worried about us."

"Um, no, I'm sure he was very concerned." Se7en struggled to recall if Min ever mentioned he'd asked the members to call him. He wasn't certain.

They'd mumbled a lot of things when their mouths were pressed together. It might have been something that Min said. Of course, they'd issued a moratorium of mentioning the other members when making out. Since they'd been making out nearly non-stop since before dinner, it would have been hard to work that small bit of information into the conversation.

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“Is he okay, Se7en?” The dreamer in Jae’s voice dissipated, leaving the hard edges of the street-smart youth the older man suspected lurked inside of the other singer.

This was the man who arranged for Rain to be dealt with a few reminders to leave the youngest member of their group alone. If not directly then by some circuitous route that could not be traced back to Jaejoong. Se7en would be careful not to cross the singer. He liked his face. Having Yunho pummel it was indignant enough.

“He’s fine, Kim.” The older man peeked over his shoulder at Changmin who was staring back at him with hooded eyes. “And I’ve woken him up.”

“Phone.” Min held his hand out to his lover.

“And now he’s going to want to talk to you.” Se7en passed the cell over to his lover, kissing Min’s shoulder before sliding from the bed. “Minku, give Yunho my love. I’m going to get something cold to drink. I’ll bring you something.”

Se7en spent ten minutes in the kitchen, staring at the chaise lounge he’d first begun to love Min on. Leaning on his elbows, he sipped at his beer, wondering if he shouldn’t move the chaise into his bedroom. The last thing he wanted was for someone to sit down on it.

“Now who’s getting mushy?” Se7en shook his head, finishing the bottle with a final swig. “Why not get matching tattoos while you’re fucking at it, Choi?”

Still, it was maneuverable enough that he could slide it into his bedroom. He needed something to rest by the windows. Some place for Min to read while he worked on music. Nodding, Se7en tossed the empty bottle away and dug around in his nearly empty freezer, looking for the box of mochi ice cream he’d bought a couple of days ago.

Min was saying goodbye when he walked into the door, holding up the pair of mochi balls he’d taken from the container. Crawling onto the bed, Se7en paused and kissed Min’s ankle, rubbing one of the frozen ice cream bits on the taut tendon behind Min’s foot, licking the spot clean before his lover could jerk away. Laughing, Changmin wished Jaejoong a good night and hung up, tackling Se7en back onto the bed.

Straddling the older man’s hips, Min bent over and bit into one of the mochi-wrapped ice cream, sucking at Se7en’s fingers and licking off the sweet rice powder clinging to the tips. His hips rubbed tiny circles on Se7en’s groin, capturing the other man’s sex against the part of his rear.

Groaning, the older man bent his head, licking at the line between Min’s neck muscles. Changmin pulled away, placing his hands on Se7en’s chest. Shaking his head at his lover, Min smiled wickedly.

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“You stay there.” He whispered, bending down to kiss at the soft spot under Se7en’s right ear, nipping at the other man’s pierced earlobe. “Eat your ice cream. I have other things I want to lick.”

“Oh no, you’re going to get me started and it’s too soon.” Se7en refused, offering the mochi for Min to bite into. “Here, cool yourself down.”

Changmin pouted, then blushed, realizing how brazen he’d been. Laughing at his lover’s flushed cheeks, Se7en pulled the young man down onto his side, cuddling up against him. Their legs tangled, Se7en graceful in his nudity while Changmin shifted around, unsure on where to put his hands or other parts that seemed to have a mind of their own.

“Relax, baby.” Se7en murmured, his hand stroking Min’s side. “I’m going to take care of you.”

Changmin bit down into the ice cream treat, his teeth hurting slightly with the cold. The chill hit the roof of his mouth and spread down his throat. Gasping, he chewed around the mochi, trying to warm his tongue as Se7en chuckled under his breath.

“Don’t laugh, it’s cold.” Min pouted, frowning his brow. He swallowed, savouring the chocolate. Opening his mouth, he took a smaller bite when Se7en held the mochi over his parted lips.

“I could warm you up.” Leaning closer, Se7en chased the bite of mochi into Min’s mouth, licking at the back of his teeth.

Changmin’s body stirred under the contact, the kernel of his desire ignited by the taste of Se7en mingled with the chocolate ice cream in his mouth. Willing himself to calm down, his body refused to listen, strengthening its desire and shifting heat from his belly down to his groin.

“Now why aren’t we doing this again?” Min grumbled under his breath, swallowing the rest of his mouthful.

“Because if we do, you’ll be too sore.” His lover kisses his nose. “And I want to leave you wanting more of me later.”

“Ah, good plan.” Changmin stifled a yawn, gulping when Se7en’s fingers traced over the ridge of his hip bone. “Stop that. You’re making me want you. You can’t tease if you’re not going to make me... I’m trying to be good here.”

“I like that I made you not so good.” He cuddled closer, wrapping his arms around Changmin’s waist. Se7en nuzzled his lover’s neck, placing small kisses and nibbles until he reached Min’s collar bone. Traveling back up, he left a trail of goosebumps across Min’s chest, the shivers working down the young man’s arms and tracing around his nipples. “Come here.”

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“Go away. Come here.” Min mumbled. “No touch. Touchy now. Make up your mind.”

“I love it when you’re grumpy.” Se7en suckled on Min’s lower lip, drawing it into his mouth to nibble on, pulling out a bite before releasing it again. “I love touching you. And I want to. It’s just very soon, baby. I don’t want to hurt you. It might feel okay now but if I go at you again, it’s not going to feel good afterwards. Trust me on that.”

Min quirked his mouth, squinting at his lover’s earnest face. “Maybe you just don’t want me anymore. The others go at it constantly.”

“Okay, first... none of that shit about not wanting you.” Se7en tapped his nose with a finger. “I think I’ve proven myself in wanting you. Fuck, do you have any idea how hard it is not to just roll you over and keep going? Look at me, I’m going to be poking a new belly button into you if my body has any say in it.”

“And secondly, if those horny little boys that you live with didn’t take the time with each other and ease each other into sex, then they were probably hurting for weeks afterwards.” His voice grew gentler, coaxing a smile from the petulant young man. “Do you really think I don’t want you?”

“No,” Min shook his head, ashamed at playing games with Se7en’s affections. “Sorry, I get grumpy when I’ve not gotten enough sleep. I shouldn’t have said that.”

“It’s okay, Minku.” Se7en shrugged it off, playing with Min’s mouth with his lips.

He snuggled down into the blankets, his finger tips running along the base of Changmin’s neck. They kissed, slow, lingering caresses that did more to comfort than arouse. Min sighed, laying his head back when Se7en rolled over on top of him, the man’s greater weight trapping him against the mattress.

Se7en still tasted of ice cream and dark pleasures, his tongue skillfully threading into Min’s mouth and stoking the fires the young man strained to keep down. The older man’s were making quick work of the control he had over his sex, Se7en’s skillful touching a scorching trail over his overheated body.

“You’re making me insane, Mitsuru.” Changmin murmured, leaning his head back and gasping as Se7en’s sharp teeth closed over one of his nipples. The sharp bite and release hardened his sex and he strained to lift his hips, rubbing himself against the man’s thigh. “I need...”

“I’m going to give you what you need, baby.” Pulling himself up, Se7en laved at Min’s mouth. “Lay back and let me give you pleasure. I might not be



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able to be inside of you but there's no reason I can't have the taste of you on my tongue."



Changmin collapsed onto the couch of the studio's green room, his face hitting the hard faux-leather and sticking from the overabundance of makeup on his face. Sighing, he debated crawling over to the stylist to beg for some cleanser but the distance seemed too far to walk.

Besides, Jaejoong was getting his face cleaned off first. The older man was particular about his skin, hating the greasy stage make up they were sometimes slathered with, the thick pancake leaving a greasy sheen behind even after scrubbed off with soap and water.

Yoochun slid down onto the couch next to him, holding out a bag of cotton balls and astringent. "Here, I stole these from the table. You can use them."

"Thanks." Min took the bottle and sat up, smiling gratefully at his friend. Soaking a cotton ball, he ran it over his face, working the make up out of the creases besides his nose and the flat of his forehead. Yoochun wrinkled his nose at the smell but didn't move, his body nearly as drained of energy as Junsu's.

The hour was late, nearly midnight after a long day. Changmin barely had enough time to kiss Se7en goodbye when the older singer dropped him off at the apartment, having to hurry upstairs to meet with the others before their van came to take them to their first appointment. The hours flew by in a rush of dancing and questions, their scant Japanese strained nearly to its limits. He'd struggled with some of the less known words, often whispering into Yunho's ear when the leader searched his mind to remember something they'd just been taught.

All in all, a good day for TVfXQ, although their exhaustion seemed to be steeped down into their bones. Min looked around the room, too tired to do more than wait for someone to tell him that it was time to go. Junsu walked by, pulling Yoochun from the couch and offering a hand to Changmin.

Of all of them, the leader seemed nearly unaffected by the pace, although Min knew that to be a lie. Yunho's stress was borne silently and behind closed doors. Stumbling in front of a camera or falling down before the world was not something that their leader would tolerate from himself. The rest of them could fall apart around him and he would pick them up to carry them but Yunho refused to give himself that luxury.

"Are we going home?" Changmin asked plaintively. Yunho's face softened into concern for their youngest, his arm wrapping around Min's waist to lead him back to the van.

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“Yeah, we’re going home.” Yunho promised. “We don’t have to be anywhere until tomorrow afternoon. There’ll be some food for us when we get there. How about if you eat something then crash for the night?”

“Just tell Junsu not to run in the hall.” He murmured, half asleep on his feet. Yunho grinned over Min’s shoulder at Jaejoong, the singer shaking his head in sympathy at their youngest’s worn down voice. “He makes so much noise.”

“I’ll tell him.” Jaejoong replied, holding the door to the van open for Min to step up into. “Just sit in the front seat. We’ll tell you when we get home.”

Min didn’t remember the ride back just the sound of the engine being started and then suddenly, being shaken awake by Yunho. Rubbing at his face, he blinked and winced at the burn of his contacts against his eyes. They stuck against his lids for a second before he could adjust his vision. Sighing, he pulled himself from the van, holding onto Jaejoong’s shoulder as he stepped over the curb, his legs aching.

“Maybe you shouldn’t have stayed out so late with Choi last night?” Junsu teased him.

“I don’t hurt from Se7en.” Min replied without thinking. “My ass is fine. It’s my thighs that hurt. Too much dancing.”

“I don’t want to hear about your ass hurting or not hurting.” Yunho muttered darkly. “In fact, the only ass I want to hear about is Jaejoong’s and that’s only in the privacy of our bedroom.”

“He is no fun.” Yoochun said with a sigh. “I think I wanted to hear about Min’s ass. Yunho shouldn’t be able to set the topics of conversation.”

“Aish. No. Not while I’m around.” Yunho cut across the air with a stiff hand gesture. “No more. Wait until I’m out of the room. That’s final.”

“Don’t worry, Chunnie.” Jaejoong unlocked their front door, stretching down to work his shoes off and placing them on a shelf. “I’m going to make me and Yunnie-ah plates of food to take into our room. You’ll have all the talking time that you want.”

“I’m not going to talk about my ass.” Changmin shook his head. “You guys can talk about your asses all you want. I just want some food and then to go to sleep.”

“No phone call from your lover?” Junsu asked, his teasing voice a singsong lilt.

“Dong-Wook had to go to Seoul this afternoon. He’ll be back in the morning.” Min picked through the boxes of food on the counter, sniffing at some of the noodles before helping himself. “I’ve talked to him before we did this last interview.”

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“You trust him going to Korea without you?” Yoochun pursed his lips, thinking. “I’d be afraid he’d hook up with some sweet babe while he was out of my sight.”

“That’s just the kind of person that you are, Chunnie.” Min smiled sweetly, grabbing a pair of wooden chopsticks. “No wonder Junsu follows you around everywhere.”

“Hey!” Yoochun protested, elbowed in the ribs by his lover to move aside. “Did you hear what he said about me, Susu-ah?”

“Min-min is tired and hungry. You should know better than to poke at him.” Junsu picked out a shitake mushroom from a box, holding it up for Yoochun to take. Mollified, Yoochun licked at the other man’s fingers as he bit, earning him an eye roll from Yunho.

“Yunnie, I’ve got our food.” Jaejoong held up two plates for his lover to see. “Can you grab us something to drink?”

Nodding, their leader grabbed a couple of bottles of tea from the refrigerator, wishing the others a good night before following Jae down the hall. Changmin stared down at his plate of food, his appetite fleeing under the fatigue in his belly. Sitting down in the living room to leave the other two space and privacy in the dining room, Min poked at his noodles while listening to the couple’s soft banter.

They were so unlike he and Se7en, Min realized. Much younger in how they interacted. Se7en’s goofiness still held a tincture of maturity that Changmin cherished, burdened with a more solemn personality than the two middle members of his group. Their teasing took on a more seductive, raunchy tone and Min sighed, reaching for his back pack to pull out his music player. He would finish his food and then crawl into bed, eschewing taking his dinner in his room for fear of accidentally leaving a dirty plate behind.

He knocked over his backpack with his knee, spilling its contents onto the floor. Sighing, Changmin bent over, grabbing his notebooks and other things and stopped when he found an envelope with his name on it. Curious, he turned it over and leaned back into the soft couch, his dinner cold and forgotten on the coffee table.

Se7en’s handwriting made him smile. He could see the man’s aggressive, smooth personality in each penstroke, strong bold black markings scrawled over the beige parchment. Slitting the envelope open, he unfolded the pages to read what his lover left him.

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Hey baby,

You're asleep right now. I don't know when you are going to find this but right now, you're asleep next to me. We've just spent the night making love for the first time and then well, you needed a little help sleeping so of course, I was more than happy to spend a few minutes working the edge off of you.

I'm sitting here with the taste of you and chocolate mochi ice cream in my mouth, watching you sleep. You look so peaceful, and God, so fucking sexy. I just want to crawl over you and have you again.

But I can't. Because I know it would hurt you. And baby, that's the last thing that I want to do. I never ever want to hurt you.

I can't say that I won't. I'm an asshole. I know that. You know that. Hell, most of the world knows that but you do make me better than I am. I don't know if I've told you that, but you do.

Before I woke us both up (and I have no regrets for doing that because I got to hear those little kitten noises that you make in your throat when I have you in my mouth), I actually had a dream.

I can't tell you the last time that I fell asleep and I had a dream. You know I don't sleep a lot. And I've lost the ability to carry my mind off to somewhere else a long time ago. I think your love for me gave my mind just the smallest taste of flight and it felt so damned good.

This dream of mine was kind of weird, mostly it was me sitting at a table. I'm not even sure where I was but it was a nice table and there were people walking by. Gorgeous laughing people and I looked at them and I knew who they were. Not everything but just tidbits that made me smile. Someone came by and served me a glass of wine and when I turned, I could feel you nearby. I couldn't see you but I could feel you. I knew then that I was waiting for you. Somehow I knew that somewhere you were there and you were heading towards me.

When I woke up, you were there beside me, your eyes closed and your face so beautiful in the evening light. I hated waking you. But I hated not having your kiss even more.

I'm going to be stuck in Korea for a couple of days. And since I don't know when you're getting this, because you have entire countries lost someplace in that backpack of yours, I wanted to tell you that I love you. I loved you the moment I turned and saw that gorgeous

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face against the Seoul skyline, even though I tried to tell myself that it was only going to be sex.

And then I fell in love with you when you blushed under my kiss. How the fuck was I supposed to know that your beautiful face would be my downfall? That mouth, God fucking damn that mouth. I want to drink wine from your mouth. To eat food from you. Every thing that I've ever stolen from your lips has tasted like Heaven.

You're my angel, Minku. No matter what happens in the world and around us, you are my angel. I wish I could be yours but I think my wings are tarnished nearly black from my sinning and rusted shut. I hope that I don't rub any of it off on you. If anything, you've made me think I could fly again, even as chained down to the ground as I am, you make me feel like I can soar.

Just from your touch. Just from your mouth. And certainly from your smile.

Get some sleep, baby. Please. I intend to keep you up for a very long time when I get back.

Love,

Your Shichi.

# 33

Time was too short for Changmin. There simply wasn't enough minutes in the day for their lives, much less cobbling together an hour for Se7en in the middle of it. They'd spent the better part of the week whispering or texting short messages in between appointments and events, Min frustrated and Se7en bemused by his young lover's impatience.

It was barely enough to just hear Se7en's voice, Changmin grumbled to himself. It was nearly unbearable to go without the older man's touch.

The group got the afternoon off and Min spent a good portion of it slumped against the wall in his bedroom. His book went unread, open to the page he'd found an hour ago, not a word consumed since he sat on his bed and rested his head against the window sill.

Outside, the sun shone down on a slightly dry city, the rivers and causeways swollen with newly fallen rain. Through the open window, Min heard birds chirping from a distance, and the distant sound of cars rolling by on the street, the chatter of a busy city block going about its business.

And he was sitting alone in his bedroom missing his lover. Life, like seduction, Min thought, wasn't very fair.

"Min-ah," Jaejoong stopped at the open door, staring into the youngest's room. Padding in, he climbed onto the bed next to Changmin, settling into the corner between the wall and the young man. "What's wrong?"

"Shichi is still in Korea." Min shrugged helplessly. "I have the afternoon off and don't really want to do anything but talk to him. But he's busy and I don't want to bother him. So I'm in a funk. I think that's the word. Funk."

"How long has he been gone now?" Jae strained to count the days, their lives a blur of events and clothing changes. He couldn't remember the last time he'd seen sunlight in the living room, the group often out until way past sunset. "I don't even know what day it is."

"It's Monday." Min replied. Reaching for a leather portfolio on his nightstand, he unzipped it, showing Jaejoong a stack of letters and other items, the papers creased along the folds from being re-read in the middle of the night. "He's been gone for two weeks."

"Ah," The eldest nodded, straining not to grab the letters from Min's hands and read them. His curiosity ate at him but he shoved it aside,

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preferring to give Min some privacy. Still, he worried over their youngest, especially since the schedule drove them all to exhaustion and Se7en's presence seemed to be the only thing that made Min smile for very long.

"So you miss him?" Jaejoong asked, picking up a picture that had fallen out of the portfolio.

He stared at the strip of four pictures, goofy smiles captured on both Min's and Se7en's faces in a photo booth. To the casual observer they would look like friends. To someone who knew Changmin, they would look like lovers sharing a private and sensual joke. Jaejoong knew Min very well. He could see the intimacy between the two men in the photo.

"I shouldn't." Min said, his smile widening at the sight of the photo strip. "We talk nearly every day and he sends me letters. With stupid things like pigeon feathers he finds or small crystals. He's a goof."

"Sometimes, you need goofy." Jae nodded. "He's doing well, then?"

"He's doing fine." Cocking his head, Min looked at his older friend. "He's busy and he likes it that way. It's good to see how popular he is, even if he's with another company. Shichi works very hard."

"I like how you call him Shichi." Jae wrapped one arm around Min's shoulder, giving him a hug. "It sounds special."

"Shichi...it's like a combination of Dong-Wook and Se7en." Min smiled, shy and with a fierce blush creeping down his neck. "It's short for shichimi."

"Shichimi?" Quirking his mouth in confusion, Jae wrinkled his nose. "What does that mean?"

"It's a blend of seven flavours. Like a mixture." The youngest explained. "Nanami togarashi. Pepper, orange peel, sesame seed, ginger, nori, poppy seed and sansho. It's like the sweet Dong-Wook and the spicy Se7en. Shichimi or Shichi."

"Ah, I always thought you were just calling him Se7en." Shifting, Jaejoong made room for Min to cuddle against him, their bodies leaning against one another.

"Do you call Yunho something?" Min asked. "I know he calls you BooJae."

"And he's the only one who's allowed to." Jae's eyes narrowed. "Don't get any ideas. And no, I don't really have one for Yunho. He's just Yunnie-ah, or Yun. I do call him Yun."

"Shichi calls me Minku." Changmin grinned. "But you knew that already."

"It suits you." The singer nodded. "He's helped you a lot with your Japanese. It shows."

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“It’s all we talk.” Sighing, Min folded the portfolio back up. “It helps me a lot. And him. But he writes in Korean. Thank God.”

“Minnie-ah, can I ask you something?” Jae pursed his mouth, contemplating Min’s face. “Do you love your Shichi? I mean, do you love him like I love Yunho?”

“I think we’re different, Joongie-ah.” Min admitted softly, laying his head against Jae’s shoulder. “We never speak of forever. And I don’t think we will. For us, it’s a now and always thing. In some way, we’ll always be together. How, we don’t know. But there will be a connection. He says he’s in love with me. In his own Se7en way, he is in love with me.”

“He doesn’t love like Yunho or you do. He doesn’t need or want to crawl into me and live.” Changmin explained, tilting back to look up into his hyung’s face. “You two love so...deeply and fully. There is this connection between you like a rubber band that when stretched too far apart, snap you both back together. Shichi and I are like birds, we soar on the wind, sometimes right next to one another and other times a bit farther apart but we’re together when we land. And that’s what we need.”

“Ah,” Jae kissed his dongsang’s forehead. “Angels then. Not birds. Living in heaven but loving on Earth. Not a bad way to live.”

“Shichi calls me his angel.” Another blush and a muttering of disgruntlement from his inner voice, which Min shushed to quiet. “I don’t feel like one. But then neither does he. He thinks he’s too damaged from sin and hedonism. I think he just needs a little polishing but I like him as he is. A bit of tarnish and specks of earth clinging to his metal wings.”

“Does he make you feel good?” Jae stepped carefully, not wanting to pry too deeply into the young man’s life if he wasn’t ready to share. “Did he treat you right?”

“Yes.” Min knew what his older brother was asking, if his lover took his time when they’d made love, ensuring Min’s safety and comfort. “He was nice. Shichi made me wait until I was...adjusted to him. I wanted more and then, right then. He made me stop and wait. It pissed me off.”

“Yunnie does that.” Jae ducked his head, embarrassed to talk about his relationship with the other man. “I’m too impatient sometimes.”

“Does it hurt then?” Ideas formed in Changmin’s mind, the thought of Se7en laying on his back while Min explored and took what he wanted delighting the tidbit of evil the young man had in his soul.

“Not during, a little more uncomfortable.” He admitted. “Afterwards, yes but it...feels good too. To me anyway. I keep telling Yunho that but he doesn’t believe me. Be careful though. I can see your mind working behind those eyes of yours.”



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“Do you think Shichi would think I was being too forward if I initiated things?”

“I don’t know.” Jae shrugged, smiling. “I can’t think why he would. He’s your lover. He can’t expect you to wait for him all the time, should he?”

“No.” Min agreed.

“But use oil.” The eldest grimaced. “Without it hurts too much. No matter how good it might feel at the time. In a few minutes, it stops feeling good and just burns.”

“Noted.” Min nodded. “I can’t talk about this to any of the others. Yunho, he just runs away. And tells me to go looking for you. The other two are worthless, they’re like hyena on carrion if you start talking about sex. A lot of sinister laughing and picking at a meal. It’s horrible.”

“For them, sex is about laughter and being goofy.” Jae agreed. “They’re serious about it but sometimes I think it’s more like a game then it’s about being together. They’re in love but it’s different. I don’t understand it sometimes.”

“I don’t think they understand yours, if that makes you feel better.” Changmin sighed. “Hell, sometimes I don’t understand you and Yunho.”

“I don’t either.” The singer admitted slowly, his mind wandering over to where he kept thoughts of Yunho. “There are times when I just want to throttle him because he makes me crazy and then I just want to hold him close and listen to his heart beat. I know I make him nuts. I’m sure he wants to kill me more than I want to kill him. We should keep count.”

“That would be good.” Nodding, Min agreed then thought of how he and Se7en behaved. “I think Shichi has wanted to kill me more than I wanted to kill him.”

“I think you’ve deserved it.” Jae commented. “But some of that is Yunho too.”

“God, they are bad.” Changmin huffed, disgusted at the behaviour both men seemed to provoke from one another. “I just want to smack them. And why is Yunho answering my phone when Shichi calls? He does it to bother me.”

“No, he does it to bother Dong-Wook.” The singer corrected. “I think they like it, really. They’re very masculine in how they behave. It’s silly but they understand it. And they enjoy it. They do.”

“They’re probably best friends and are laughing at us.” He grumbled. “Bastards.”

“Your Shichi is a bad influence on you.” Jae smiled. “I like it.”

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“One more question.”

“Doubt that.” The older singer made a face, ducking playfully to avoid Min’s slap across his shoulder. Jostling back into the younger man, Jae grinned. “What?”

“Have you ever thought about being, um, inside of Yunnie-ah?”

The boldness of the question shocked Jaejoong into speechlessness. Min had hinted at something like it before but never truly came out and asked him. There was a different tone in the young man’s voice, something firm and resolute that Jae wasn’t prepared for. Taking in a breath to steady his thoughts, Jae contemplated lying to the youngest but the sincerity of their relationship depended on truth, both told openly and lived.

“Yes. I have.” Jae nodded.

“Do you talk about it? I mean is he okay with it?”

“Okay with it?” The lead singer debated his lover’s responses when they spoke on the subject. “I think he’s worried that I’m not getting enough from him, that I’d want more. And to tell the truth, I’m not sure I want more.”

“Does it feel good when he touches you?” Min asked, his mind working at the puzzle of the relationship, not seeing the two people who constructed the bond. To him, Jae and Yunho became game pieces, objects to be moved about the paths of his thinking in order to put them into places he could understand.

“Yes.” Jae breathed up over his face, suddenly more bashful than he’d been in a long time. “Minnie-ah, this is very private.”

“I won’t tell anyone.” Changmin waved off the other’s concern, intent on his deductions. “If it feels good when his hands are on you there, wouldn’t it feel as good if you were in him?”

“Changmin,” Jae breathed out, knowing the young man wouldn’t be swayed from his questions. Min was lost in thought, enamored with the dynamics of a pair of lovers so different than he and Se7en. “It would feel good, I guess. But I don’t think he would feel... I don’t know if he would like it if I was...there.”

“You could go slow.” Min murmured, contemplating the act. “Like Shichi and I did. I assume he was slow with you. If he wasn’t, then maybe that’s why he’s so adamant about how Shichi treats me.”

“Minnie-ah, this is...hard to talk about.” Clearing his throat, Jae said softly. “I’ve not talked about this with Yunho as much as I’m talking about it with you.”

“You’re always telling me that any relationship should be equal.” He reminded Jaejoong. “I’m not saying that Yunho is less of a man because he

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won't receive you. Just that it's curious that you haven't tried it. If you are lovers and men, shouldn't both of you do that? I mean, eventually."

"That's an odd way of thinking about it." Jae cocked his head, staring at his younger member. "Men are equals only through equal positions in sex? Usually people think the man on the bottom is the more feminine."

"Pfah," Min dismissed the notion with a shake of his head. "Any man can get pleasure. Shichi says that only a true man can give it and have it at the same time. That's what makes someone a true lover."

"So long as you're happy with Yunho and he's making you feel good, then it doesn't matter who is where on the bed, right?" Changmin grunted, affirming his own philosophy.

"You ask too many questions, Minnie-ah." Jae pressed his free hand up to his mouth, keeping his head down as he inhaled large gulps of air. "Yunho and I...we'll get to that. Maybe. I don't think I can talk about this anymore. It's turning my face too red."

"Aish, welcome to my life." Changmin scoffed. "Shichi makes me blush just by looking at me."

"That's normal." The other nodded. "I feel like I spend half of my time hiding my face or mouth from Yunho."

"I've noticed." Grinning, the youngest member winked. "I'm stuck between the two of you, remember? Sometimes I just want to step away and let you fall on top of each other. I'm tired of being the pane of glass between two love-struck prisoners."

"Oh, I'm sorry." Jaejoong dropped his eyes, chagrin filling his smile. "I know it's rough sometimes."

"It's not so bad. I understand it more now." He replied softly, hugging the older man tightly. "Now I wish it was just someone between me and Shichi. It would make things easier. He says he misses me too."

"Ah, if you miss him and he misses you," Looking at the youngest with a sly smile, Jaejoong said. "Why don't you do something about it?"



The guard at front desk had been particularly friendly that evening, greeting him loudly as he came through the lobby doors. Too tired to do more than wave, Se7en held the lift for a woman struggling with her child, urging the worn out little boy to hurry along.

Sighing heavily as he walked out of the elevator, Se7en dug into his pockets for the keys to his apartment. Despite the costs of maintaining two

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homes, he liked having someplace stable to come back to after a long day. Someplace that smelled like him and held small treasures he brought home.

Although there was one treasure he had left back in Japan and missed sorely.

Turning the key in the lock, he frowned as he opened the front door to his Korean penthouse, seeing the foyer and living room lit up. Wondering if he'd forgotten to turn them off before he left, Se7en lay his jacket down on the entrance table, working his shoes off with his toes and leaving them behind.

The smell of cooking meat struck him first. A fragrant, homey aroma that pinched at the hunger in his stomach.

Changmin stretched out on a low chaise by the expanse of windows hit him next, all hunger except for the ravenous desire in his soul fleeing at the delectable sight of his young lover waiting for him. Se7en stared at the teeth-dimpled pout on Min's face. The other man's habit of chewing on his lip while thinking was possibly one of the most endearing of Min's traits in Se7en's opinion.

Looking up, Min kept his face down, slightly bashful and demure. Setting the book aside, he stood slow, ready to apologize to Se7en for breaking into his home uninvited.

He never had a chance to utter one word before the older man was upon him, arms bruising a tight embrace about the younger man's waist, lifting him up in the air.

Se7en ravaged at Min's mouth, drinking every last drop of air from his lover's lungs and breathing his heart beat into the space left behind. He took one kiss, then another, stopping only long enough between each caress to give Min time to catch a small breath before it was taken from him, the young man's senses overwhelmed by the other's demanding mouth.

Slowly, Se7en set Min down, rocking the young man back and forth as he suckled along Changmin's throat. Chewing back up the column until he reached his lover's mouth, Se7en gave Min one final kiss before resting his forehead against Min's, staring at his lover's brown eyes.

"God, I've missed you so fucking much, Minku." He whispered, his breath hot with want. "I am so damned happy to have my *tenshi* with me again."

## 34

Min cried.

He couldn't help it. Hearing his Shichi's voice against his ear was like a kiss to his soul.

He couldn't help but cry.

Soft delicate tears that Se7en gasped at and kissed away. Feeling the flutter of his lover's lashes under his mouth, the older man licked at the salted water along the lids, stroking away the strong emotions of Min's soul with his tongue. Smiling, Se7en pursed his lips and trailed a lengthy staggering kiss across Min's mouth, stopping at his ear and blowing hard against it, creating a raspberry noise on his lover's skin.

The feel of Se7en's mouth on his neck made Changmin laughed, a hearty welcome burst between them. It sounded so different in person, the phone line between them filtering out the golden tone at the end. Nuzzling his lover's neck, the older man breathed in the scent of Min's hair, licking at the other man's collar bone before kissing him again.

"You really should stop swearing." Min's eyes were crinkled, humour lighting up their depths.

"Fuck that." Se7en growled, playfully gnawing on his jaw line. "I see you and I just want to do the basest of things to you."

"I think I'm going to let you do the basest of things to me." The feel of Se7en around him felt as good as breathing clean air. Changmin closed his eyes for a moment, etching the moment into his heart. When he opened them, he saw the clean profile of the man he loved, as strong and vibrant as the image he held in his mind.

"Shit," The older man jerked his head back, staring down at Min's upturned face. "Is everything okay? I mean, I didn't even think about that. Is your family okay? The guys; nothing's wrong right?"

"Everyone's fine." Min's heart softened, his fingers trailing over his lover's expressive mouth. "I came here only to see you. Okay, so I called my mother to tell her that I was in Seoul but only so she knew and I could find out where to get things for dinner on such a short notice."

"You told your mom you were here?" Cocking his head, Se7en regarded the young man, intrigued. "How much have you told her?"

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“She knows about you.” Changmin admitted softly, his voice the barest of whispers over his breathing. “She’s always known that I’ve liked... men. And women. It’s not that I don’t like women. Just that I like you... a lot.”

“And she’s okay with this.” It wasn’t a question. Not really. Se7en wondered at the relationship his lover had with his family, seeing the trust in the woman that raised Min plain on his face.

“Mom knows who I am, Shichi.” He replied. “She’s always known. We’ve never kept any secrets from each other. She’s always taught me that I should love who I want and need to, not who the world thinks I should. I’m grateful for her. For that and so many things.”

“Yeah?” Se7en continued to rock his lover, enjoying the feel of the young man in his arms. The days he’d spent apart from Min were agonizing. Each free minute dominated either by work or his body tugging him back to Japan and back to the somber, curious young man he’d fallen for. “Your mother is very different from mine.”

“She think you might be good for me.” Changmin leaned into Se7en’s mouth, stealing a small nibble of his lips. “I told her that you make me smile and that every once in a while, you tease me and I like it.”

“Do you talk to her about, um, everything?” He asked, keeping Min close. He could feel his body reacting. It always reacted strongly to the presence of the young man. There was no helping the passion that raged through his limbs and across his belly, sometimes just at the thought of Changmin lying naked next to him. A clothed, warm Min in his arms was nearly as dangerous to his composure.

“A bit. Mom’s been very supportive. Of everything really.” Changmin sighed, cuddling into Se7en’s arms. “I told her that I loved you. She told me that I was lucky that you were my friend as much as my lover. Mom thinks that it’s a good thing we can laugh as well as make love. She’d hoped that for my first time.”

“Ah, so even talking about sex with your mother.” The older man whistled under his breath. “If I ever meet her, I’m going to have a hard time talking without blushing. She’ll know all my secrets.”

“She only knows that you took your time with me.” He reassured his lover, rubbing noses with Se7en. “And that I enjoyed it. A lot. Okay, more than a lot. She’s okay with that. Mom just wants me to be happy and live my life as best I can.”

“How did you get in?” Nipping a small sliver of skin between his teeth, Se7en smiled, satisfied with the tiny mark he left behind. “Not that I mind, baby. In fact, if you’re going to be sneaking off to Korea surprise me, I’m going to get your own key.”

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“Taebin-hyung met me at the airport.” Min explained. “Jaejoong called him for me and arranged it. I figured you wouldn’t mind since, well, he knows about us.”

“Ah, Tae. I’m going to have to listen to him teasing me about how you bring me to my knees with that sexy smile of yours.” Amused, the singer sighed. “Not that I mind. I’ll give him a call tomorrow to thank him.”

“He said that you owe him a lap dance.” Changmin laughed. “From a girl. Not from you. He’s got a dirty mind. And as dirty of a mouth as you do.”

“That’s my boy.” Se7en nodded.

“I thought I was your...” Min couldn’t complete the sentence, his mind too strained from the effort of trying to beat Se7en at his game. “I can’t say that. I just can’t.”

“It’s okay. I don’t think of you as a boy, baby. Just as my lover.”

“Remind me to send your mother a very large bouquet of flowers for raising you.” Se7en murmured, placing a soft kiss along Min’s temple. “Later though. I think I’m hungry. What did you make me?”

“Kalbi.” Changmin said. “When I called her, Mom told me where I could get marinated meat and things for the cabbage salad I made you before. I didn’t know when you’d be home but I wanted to recreate our first meal but figured kalbi would be better since it took longer to cook. It was so nice until...”

Min trailed off, the incidents of that night left unsaid. There were too many things that drove them apart that evening and so much that eventually brought them back together. In creating their evening again, Changmin hoped to re-invent those memories, washing away the bitterness of harsh words left to steep too long.

“Tell me you got cheesecake and I’ll love you forever.” Se7en slid his hands down to span Min’s waist.

“You’d better rethink that.” Changmin warned, shaking his head at his lover’s silliness. “Because forever is a long time to promise just for some cheesecake.”

“You don’t know how much I love cheesecake.” The older man waggled his eyebrows, reluctantly released his young lover as Min pulled away to check on the food. Se7en padded after him, smug at the domestic scene playing out in his kitchen. “And I can think of worse ways to spend forever than you underneath me.”

“Who’s to say I’m always going to be the one underneath?” Changmin scoffed, reaching for the package of instant noodles he’d found in Se7en’s pantry. The pickings there had been lean, no spices to speak of and barely

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enough cooking oil to grease the stove's grill. Thankfully, he'd gotten mostly everything else on the way over or they'd been forced to eat cans of vinegar-soaked vegetables and lime-flavoured ice.

Opening the wine cabinet, Se7en contemplated his choices. He drank wine purely for the taste, preferring reds that were to his liking rather than what people told him were good. Pulling out a cabernet he liked, Se7en turned around and grinned at Min's perplexed look.

"What?" Se7en glanced down at the bottle before putting it on the counter. "You're a wine critic too?"

"No," Min shook his head. "I don't know anything about wine but there is a bear breathing fire on that label. That's kind of scary."

"Trust me on this, Minnie-ah," He reached for a pair of wine glasses, turning on the faucet to rise out any dust that might have gathered on the glasses' bowls. "A lot of people pay a lot of money for wines because someone told them that it's good or something incredible. Truth is, unless you spend a lot of time tasting wines, you should just go with what you like."

"The fire-breathing bear wine... very good." Se7en reassured his lover with a kiss. "And it will go well with kalbi. And your crunchy sweet salad."

"You don't have a rice cooker here either." Changmin nodded towards a small bright red appliance sitting against the counter's back splash. "I think your designer should be beaten. What kind of Asian kitchen doesn't have a rice cooker?"

"My kitchens don't usually have any Asians in them." He remarked with a shrug. "I don't cook a lot. Okay make that I don't cook at all. Mostly instant food or take out. I use my refrigerator and garbage can. Sometimes my microwave."

"And wine glasses." The younger man shook his head, sliding around Se7en's waist, his hand at the other man's back. "Stand still. I need to get some banchan out of the fridge."

"I wouldn't trust anything that's in there." Se7en made a face.

"I figured as much." Changmin replied, gathering up small clear plastic containers. "I stopped at a banchan merchant on the way over. I didn't think you'd have anything worth eating in your kitchen."

"You have so little faith in me." The older man peered around his lover's shoulder, staring into the nearly empty depths of his ice box. "Okay, so there isn't a lot of food there but there's some in the freezer."

"You have more instant noodles in your cupboard." Min began handing the other man containers. "Be useful. Put these in some bowls."



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“We’re not just going to eat out of these?” Se7en wrinkled his nose, wondering if he even had banchan bowls in his cabinets. Min’s steely look made him nod curtly, smartly turning on his heel and begin to search through his cupboards. Finding a few shallow bowls, he looked over his shoulder, seeing Min had turned back to laying raw slices of meat on the stove’s grill. “They’re not going to match. Is that okay?”

“That should be fine.” Min murmured, turning the thick meat pieces over with a pair of tongs. The kalbi was fragrant, the scents of ginger and sesame seed oil filling the kitchen. “Do you want to eat at the dining room table or by the windows?”

“I have a dining room table?” Se7en grinned at Min’s shocked look. “I usually cover it with music and other stuff. I don’t think I’ve actually eaten there. By the windows is good. I like watching the lights on your face while we eat. It makes you pretty.”

Min’s blush was sweet, Se7en thought to himself as he opened up containers and sniffed at the contents. Using a spoon, he dished out a blood-red kimchi, the fragrant peppers and cabbage making his mouth water. Others followed; kkakdugi, japchae, sigeumchi-namul, gakdugi and Se7en’s favourite, mu-chae. Stealing a shred of white radish, Se7en placed the banchan on what he thought was a serving tray, earning him another odd look from Changmin.

“Now what?” He asked, kissing Min’s neck then sniffing at the cooking meat.

“That’s a cookie sheet, Shichi.” Changmin nodded at Se7en’s choice of platters.

“It’s flat.” Se7en responded. “What else do we need?”

“True.” Min agreed. The meat looked done to him, seared to a dark caramel brown. Placing the strips on a plate, he turned the stove off, turning to watch Se7en scooping rice into a bowl.

Watching Se7en was a delight, the man’s strong hands competently economical as he moved the wooden spatula around the rice pot. To Min’s eyes, he looked like he’d fallen from heaven, dark hair over high cheekbones and the beautiful, sensual mouth that brought such pleasure to nearly every inch of Changmin’s body. Se7en pinched a few grains between his fingers, bringing them up to be suckled clean. The older man turned, stopping when he saw his lover staring at him.

“What?” Se7en said around his fingers, looking down at the bowl of rice.

“Nothing. I just like watching you eat.” Min replied, his voice soft and affectionate.

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"I like eating you while I watch." Se7en grins when Min gasped in shock. Walking the bowl out to the low table by the windows, he bent over, given Changmin a good view of his rear. "You are so easy to make bashful. It's cute."

"I am not cute." Min threatened his lover with the pair of tongs covered with kalbi sauce. "I am fierce."

"You keep telling yourself that, Minku." Se7en laughed, returning to the kitchen to retrieve the cookie sheet. "Come on, I want to spend some time feeding you before I strip you naked and have you on the floor."



Se7en leaned over his lover's shoulder, tipping Min's chin until he could reach his mouth. Dipping his head down, the older man opened his lips, slowly letting a dribble of wine flow from him onto Min's tongue. Lowering his mouth down, he sealed their kiss, stroking Min's neck with his finger tips, feeling the young man swallow under his hand.

With Min laying with his back to Se7en's stomach, they'd watched the city lights slowly come on, the far off hills scalloping shadows between the jutting buildings. From the apartment, they could see the river, a silvery streak sparkling under the light-bleached sky. A rolling bank of fog hung just beyond the ridge, slowly moving to veil the farther hills.

"You taste so good." Se7en's voice cracked, a dark undertone purring under his words. He could fall into Min's eyes, their sienna depths holding so many answers to the world and more than a few questions, the young man's curiosity flickering up from his soul. "I could just sit here and drink from you forever."

"Forever is a long time to live without food." Min replied, laughing softly at Se7en's chuckle.

"So it is all about food then for you." He bit down on the young man's collarbone, frustrated by the cotton shirt in his way. "Lean forward, Minku. I've got to take some of your clothes off."

"How about if we take all of my clothes off?" Changmin bent forward, shedding the t-shirt and letting it slither to the floor. Standing, he stepped away from the couch, ducking out of Se7en's reach. Hooking his thumbs into the waistband of his jeans, he turned, his eyes unconsciously seductive as he licked his mouth with a slow, sensual movement of his tongue.

"I think that's possibly the best idea since you snuck off and came here." Reaching for Min, Se7en stood, quickly grabbing at the young man's waist before he slipped too far away. "Come along, Minku. Let me show you where the bedroom is. I've got plans for that delicious body of yours."

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“Do I get to have any plans for yours?” Min stopped quickly, holding Se7en’s fingers tight in his hand.

Se7en didn’t have to wonder what Min was asking. Since he’d first given the older singer control over how their relationship developed, Changmin strained at not being able to set some sort of pace for their loving, his subtly aggressive personality at odds with being guided through an unfamiliar path.

The Changmin he knew had to have some say in his life. It was an intrinsic desire to be in control of his own destiny. Se7en understood that. He shared that trait with his young lover. It’s what bound their friendship tight about their love, the knowing that they hungered to reach goals they set for themselves, including each other.

“Baby, I would love to be a part of any plan you might have for me.” Lifting Min’s hand to his mouth, Se7en kissed the younger man’s fingers, turning his arm over to place another kiss on the fluttering pulse on Min’s wrist. “I trust you. I’m yours as much as you are mine, Minku. Fully and completely.”

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They started in the shower, initially on the premise to wash off the day and their dinner from their bodies. It quickly moved to other very interesting things that resulted in Changmin being pushed against the shower wall, his cheek and stomach flat against the tiles.

Se7en's fingers should be outlawed, he murmured against the wall. His tongue too.

The smoothness of the slate aventurine rubbed against Min's sex, the sensitive tip lightly stroked with each thrust of his hips. With his knees spread and his hips canted up, Changmin rested most of his weight on his shoulders, leaving himself open for Se7en's laving.

Water coursed over their naked bodies, filling crevices and overflowing onto their long limbs. Reaching for a soft cloth, Se7en dipped up into the cleft between Min's rear, washing him clean. Chasing down the shadow of his lover's ass with his tongue, Se7en tossed the cloth onto the built-in sitting shelf against the far wall.

"I'm going to get to do this too, yes?" Changmin gasped when Se7en's tongue eased against the hidden pucker of his entrance. "God..."

Min's panting grew harsh, his chest heaving as Se7en dipped in deeper. With his fingers covered in an oil-based lotion, the older man eased a fingertip in alongside his tongue, plunging the first digit on his finger in and out. Holding his hand against Min's back to keep him steady, Se7en crouched behind his lover, his teeth gently working on the soft skin between Min's muscular glutes.

Flattening his tongue, Se7en licked up Min's crevice, using his palm to separate Min's cheeks. Circling his finger into the young man's tightness, he spent a few minutes licking and tasting the muskiness of Min's body. Falling into a steady rhythm, he shifted his shoulders, drawing Min's hip down so the young man could brace himself on Se7en's body. With his leg canted to the side, Changmin's core opened up for Se7en's explorations, his hands pressing against the tiled walls. With his mouth open, Min gulped at the drops of water splashing onto his tongue, screwing his eyes tightly shut while he willed himself to relax for Se7en's exploring fingers and tongue.

With one finger pressed into his lover, Se7en eased another in, stretching Changmin open. He listened carefully to Min's vocalizations, the

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young man's pleas for more turning guttural the longer he took licking at Min's entrance.

"Let's move this into the bedroom, baby." Se7en murmured, his mouth pressed on the small of Min's back. "We'll be more comfortable."

They kissed while scrambling back to the corner bedroom, the filmy drapes lining the ceiling high windows softening the hard lines of the room. A broad low platform bed dominated the long wall, the covers rumpled from Se7en's late night tossing and turning. The unmade sheets tore at Min's heart, the twisted linens a clear sign of his lover's frequent insomnia.

Cupping Se7en's face, Min found his lover's mouth, fully embracing the kiss deep down into his soul. He wanted to take away the glimmer of sadness he sometimes found behind the cocky exterior of Se7en's dominant personality. Putting his hands under Min's hips, Se7en lifted him clear of the floor and laid the young man on the mattress, sliding his body over his lover's. Stretching over Min, Se7en ran his hands down the young man's legs, feeling the strength in the man's thigh.

"You are gorgeous." Se7en stroked across Min's hip, tracing a circular trail around the rise of bone he found there then up along Min's torso, eliciting a small giggle when the light touch tickled. Min's stomach flexed, trapped under Se7en's chest.

"Shichi...mitsu..." Changmin laughed hard, squirming around his lover's mouth. Se7en continued to nip and bite, gnawing lightly. "Hey!"

"What, baby?" Lifting his head, the older man smiled up at his lover.

"Turn over." Changmin whispered, not believing his daring mind. His lust wanted slaking and his tongue wanted to see how his lover tasted. "Please."

Se7en slid over, resting on one elbow and looked at his often too-serious lover's face. Quirking his mouth, the older man nodded slowly, moving over to lay down on the mattress. He grabbed at one of the pillows resting against the headboard, pushing it under his hips to raise himself up at an angle.

Changmin nervously kissed his lover's muscular shoulder, wondering where to start. The feel of Se7en's fingers along the inside of his thigh, a soft reassurance that the young man could explore at his leisure.

He'd not taken a lot of time examining Se7en's back, something he wanted to rectify. Starting at the man's wide shoulders, he outlined each line of hard muscle with his tongue, leaving a moistness behind. Remembering something that drove him insane, the young singer mimicked what Se7en often did to him.

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Min blew lightly on the wet skin, watching with great delight at the sprinkle of goose bumps that cropped up over his lover's spine and the lingering moan from Se7en's sensually parted mouth.

"Minku. Yeah, that's nice." Se7en murmured, turning his face to rest his cheek against the pillow. He could see Min's hands on his arm, bending slightly to kiss his lover's fingers.

"Nope. Stay there. Don't move." Changmin pushed at Se7en's shoulder, kissing him hard on the mouth. "You try to lie there and stay still when my mouth's on you. See how hard it is."

"Okay, baby." Se7en smiled. He'd tasted the bashfulness on Min's fingers. He knew the flush of innocence that was in his lover's blood. It left a sweetness along the softness of Changmin's skin. Even when Min wasn't aware of it. Se7en was. He also knew what was going to come next.

"I'm...not sure what I'm doing." Changmin whispered, suddenly overwhelmed by the enormity of what he wanted to do. It seemed so easy when Se7en turned his attentions onto Min. Why couldn't he do the same? "How do you know what I like? How do I know what you'd like?"

"Baby, you're thinking too much." The older man responded, keeping his shoulders flat against the mattress. "What do you want to do?"

"Lick you. Like you did to me." Min sighed, his fingers following the dots of water pearling over Se7en's back. "I want to lick these off."

"Then start there, baby." Se7en sighed, contented when the hot feel of Min's tongue dipped and curved over his back, laving the water from his skin.

"The water tastes different with you under it." Min murmured. "Like li hing mui, sweet and a bit of something underneath it. Not a lot, just a little bit. Do you taste like this everywhere?"

Se7en remained silent except for the rough murmur of pleasure in his throat, forcing himself to stay still under Min's roaming tongue. It had been years since someone took care with his pleasure, his sex life for the most part a flurry of frenzied couplings then falling off to a few chance encounters with people he liked. He'd nearly forgotten how much more erotic love was when it was taken slowly, his lover's lips pressing butterflies of affection on the dip of his spine.

"You're driving me insane, baby." Se7en's low moaning words set off bursts of excitement in Min's belly. The older man shifted, not quite squirming, as Changmin explored the valleys of his lover's back.

"Good. Now you know how I always feel." Min jerked away from Se7en's hip, shocked at what came out of his mouth. "That wasn't supposed to be out loud."

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“You are so cute, Minku.” The pillow was an agonizing pleasure against Se7en’s body, its silky cotton case smooth on his groin. “Baby...”

Changmin got as far as the crest of Se7en’s rear before he was grabbed about the waist and pushed down into the mattress. He had barely enough time to take a breath to replace the one he lost when he hit the bed before his lover’s mouth was on his. The pout of his bottom lip was sucked into Se7en’s mouth and bitten hard enough that he moaned at the pleasurable pain streaking down his throat and into his chest.

“Hey!” Min protested, then lost himself in the feel of Se7en’s hand around his sex, the older man stroking him harder.

The pleasure nearly hurt, an aching sensation pressing against the walls of his shaft. Kisses rained down over his chest and Min arched his back, his hips moving in tandem to Se7en’s touch. He knew then he’d driven his lover to this, an overwhelming need to be surrounded by Min’s velvet heat.

Se7en’s fingers weren’t going to be enough for him that night. Min understood that. So did Se7en who whispered hot promises into the curve of his young lover’s neck.

“I’m going to have you, baby.” Se7en licked at the bite he’d left on Min’s neck, the bruised spot ripening to a purple butterfly splotch under Min’s right ear. “Then when you’re ready, I want you inside of me. I want that so much.”

The lube was cool at first, just a splash of a chill before warming up. A tingle stretched across Min’s entrance as the gel activated under their combined heat, the friction of Se7en’s fingers pushing up into him setting Min on fire. Writhing, he struggled to get more of his lover’s hand inside of him, gripping Se7en’s shoulders with nearly rigid fingers, unable to do anything but grunt with his need.

“Get up on your knees, baby.” Se7en guided Min up, turning him around until his chest rested against the wood of low headboard.

He was lifted up, his hips tilted up and back, balancing on his spread knees and wide open for the older man’s pleasure. Min heard the snap of latex as Se7en adjusted a condom around himself. His breath hitched at the familiar scent of the oil and condom mingling in his lover’s hand as Se7en poured oil on himself, his fingers working up his own shaft in preparation for his entrance.

Changmin gasped when Se7en bit down hard between his shoulder blades, not letting go of the younger man as he dug his fingers into Min’s heavily oiled entrance. Scissoring his fingers apart, Se7en sucked hard on the bite of skin he held tight, holding Min still with a steady pressure of his teeth.

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It would be rough, Changmin's mind whispered in the distance. I want this, he replied to himself. God, I've missed this. I've missed him.

There was little time to prepare for the onslaught of sensations that began to rock through his body. Se7en found the tiny burl in his core and stoked the embers of Min's passions with an ease that turned Changmin's thoughts to slush. Nothing remained of the cool, collected scholar. With his head tossed back and his teeth bared to the sky, Min found himself reduced to a barely sentient creature, his body moving in time to Se7en's rhythmic thrusts.

This was it was to be human, he realized. To fall into the pleasure of his lover's touch. This was the beginning of where we all came from, an intense burst of pleasure that was brought on by someone else. Was it any wonder that his body craved the other man's touch. Down inside of him, the primordial lust for this pleasure raged, lurking under the veneer of his personality. Se7en knew exactly how to bring it out.

Min would have to thank him for that later.

Once he recovered.

The headboard was low enough that he was bent over the top lip, his hands clenched tight around its rounded edge. It gave Min enough support to lean against. Even better, it made sure that he had no where to go for when Se7en began pounding into him.

He felt his lover's hand on his hip then the burn of something hard being pushed into him, the head of Se7en's sex sliding past the finger the older man left at the entrance of his body. Hissing, he strained to accept the intrusion, wanting the man deep inside of him. Se7en's free hand reached up to his belly, pulling him slightly up and backwards, easing the way for the hard shaft being worked into him.

"There you go, baby. Easy. Remember to breathe." Se7en murmured, releasing the bite he'd held. Kissing at the dimpled skin he left behind, he moved his hips forward, sliding an inch of himself in before easing back out, slowly allowing Min to accept his breadth. The young man was tight around him, nearly too tight for comfort but Se7en couldn't wait and from the harsh rumblings of need from his lover's throat, neither could Min.

"Now. Need." Min growled, pushing back against Se7en's sex.

Even as he was losing his mind, Min laughed at the idea that the man on the receiving end of sex was considered submissive. He had more power over Se7en's body than he could imagine. Every twitch of his hips drove him down along his lover's sex, and the pulling forward made Se7en whimper and mewl, needing Min around him again.



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Min was heady with the control he had. And lost in the pleasure of his lover as a growling Se7en thrust into him, burying himself into the young man until his stomach rested against the rise of Min's rear.

The bed rocked under the violence of their coupling, Min's knuckles nearly white around the headboard's edge. Se7en's hands rose, curling around the wood as he fought to gain leverage, his hips working him deep into Changmin. Reaching over, the young man covered his lover's fingers with his own, tangling them together and holding onto, his head bent down and his shoulders pressed out, his hips rising to meet Se7en's hard thrusts.

Losing himself in the pleasure of their joined bodies, Changmin panted, barely feeling the sweat pooling along his back. A single drop grew heavy, swelling large enough to tumble down the curve of Min's spine, trickling down to sparkle alongside the moisture of Se7en's sweat-beaded navel.

Hooking his hips upward, Se7en drove in deeper, hitting the nerves in Min's pleasure with each stroke, plunging up with each stroke. His lover screamed for more and Se7en ached to give Changmin every bit of his body, his hands held tight under Min's grip. Each stroke grew longer, his weight now resting on one knee as he fought to gain a better angle, driven on by Min's panting urges.

The splatter of seed from Min's initial release ran hot along Se7en's leg. He knew Min was close to losing himself in the rush of joy arcing over his body and Se7en wanted to cup his fingers along his lover's length to milk him into release. Trying to remove his hands from Min's grip provided futile. The younger man wouldn't let him go.

"Baby, let me." Se7en protested softly, his hips keeping to its task. He was near the edge himself, almost fallen into the black spiral of his own release.

"No." Min shook his head, his panting breath harsh and guttural. There were tears on his face, a joyous and ecstatic weeping drawn up from his soul. "Don't want to let you go. Going to do this to you when you're done. Want you like this."

Se7en's mind and body exploded at the words spilling from his lover's sensual mouth. The thought of having Min buried up inside of him, touching the darkness inside of him sent him over, Se7en's seed bursting into the condom's reservoir. The younger man moaned, his body at the brink of being overwhelmed. Another thrust of Se7en's hips worked the last of Min's control from around his body and he spilled out, christening the headboard with a splash of heated fluid.

Gasping, Se7en fell forward, sliding his hands down to wrap around Min's waist, pulling them both down on the bed. Easing free of his lover's rear, the singer kissed along Min's shoulder blades, laving at the deep mark

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he'd left behind. Trying to catch his breath, Changmin struggled to pull enough oxygen into his lungs, each draw a struggle as his body shook with the tremors of their love making.

"Love you." Se7en whispered, turning Min's face so he could kiss at his lover's mouth.

"Love you too." Changmin licked at Se7en's bottom lip, running his tongue over the older man's jaw. "Want to do that to you. Make you lose your mind like you make me lose mine."

"Give it a few minutes, baby." He grinned, stroking at the flat of Min's belly. The press of hardness on his palm surprised Se7en, his eyes deepening with the black of his pupils. "Better yet, let me see if I can't make that a bit harder and we can give it a go now. Can't wait to have you inside of me, Minku."

Min heard the moan in his voice. It was a loud sensual noise, driven mostly by the unending need for Se7en to be either in him or around him. He'd not had this much desire for anything before. Nor anyone. Kissing his lover would have to wait as Se7en kissed his way down Min's chest and over his belly, heading for the thickening sex resting against the brush of curls under his navel.

"Can't wait to be there, Shichi." He purred as Se7en enveloped him. "Just can't wait to love you."

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They began laughing nearly as soon as the foil wrapper was open. It turned into guffaws when Changmin tried to remove the condom from the torn sleeve and it flew from his fingertips as if possessed, striking Se7en in the face. The wily latex glove slithered down the older man's chest, unraveling as it went. Pinching it between his fingers, Changmin held the limp white latex up under Se7en's nose, slapping at his chuckling lover's arm.

"Come on, be serious." Min suppressed his own laugh, nearly choking on his own spit. "I don't know how to use these. I need help."

"We need a new one." Se7en wiped at his eyes with the back of his hand, his legs stretched out in front of him. "You can't really use it once it's been undone. It's easier to start at the tip and roll it down."

"Why don't they say that on this?" Turning the box over, Min looked for instructions, muttering darkly at the manufacturer's incompetence. "There isn't any diagrams or anything. How are you supposed to know these things?"

"Well," Se7en kissed his lover's mouth, licking at the corner before digging out another packet. "I think they expect men to just know these things."

"That's why people don't use them." Min shook the offending box in the air. "There aren't clear directions. And what's with the one-size-fits-all? How do they know that? Suppose you're too small and it slides right off? Or if you're too big and the ring at the bottom cuts off your circulation? How do you explain that to the hospital when you go in for help?"

"Baby, you are very silly." The older man cupped the back of his lover's head, guiding Min into a deep kiss. "Come here, I'll help you."

"I still don't think it makes much sense." Changmin muttered, skipping his hips over the linens until his legs were wrapped over Se7en's, their bodies touching casually. His fingers wandered, stroking absently at the older man's sex.

It seemed so natural now, a motion he wouldn't have dared a few months ago. The ease in which he settled into his relationship with the older man felt so right in his mind and heart both. The perpetual smile that lingered on Se7en's amiable mouth seemed to have touched his own, the

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world suddenly a wider, more interesting place with the sound of a teasing lover providing background music for his thoughts.

Se7en grasped at Min, running his fingertips over the young man's silken head. Dipping his thumb pad across the pearly wetness he found there, he lifted it to his mouth, sucking the taste of his lover from his finger. The motion was erotic, a small intimacy that hardened Min's cock as he watched Se7en's thumb dip into the moist heat of his mouth.

"Share." Changmin opened his own mouth. Se7en grinned at his greedy lover's demands, placing the ball of his thumb on the cup of Min's tongue. Sucking the digit dry, Min closed his eyes, savouring the taste of their mingled bodies.

"You look incredible doing that." Se7en stole a kiss from Min's pout, licking at the curve of the young man's upper lip. His other hand still stroked at the hard length of Min's sex, its proud stiffness firm against the singer's belly. "God, I am so lucky for having you."

"I'm going to be having you in a bit." Min growled, leaning forward, daring himself to voice his innermost thoughts.

"That is something I've wanted for a while now, Minku." He let Min guide the kiss, opening his mouth in surrender to his young lover's tongue. When they were done, they both were left gasping, their minds rattled by the other's incessant heat. "Let me help you with that. Hold onto yourself. I'll show you how to do this."

"Pull up the end, and make sure the ring is rolled under and up." Se7en held the condom up for his lover to see. "You just want to make sure that the reservoir at the end is free."

"This is very technical." Min looked up from his study of the latex sleeve, his fingers stroking along Se7en's wrist. "I'm probably going to have to do it several times before I get it right. I might still need some help."

"Ah, I'll be so very glad to help you, baby." Se7en grinned, amused at Min's teasing.

He held his lover's shaft, slowly placing the latex on the tip of Min's sex. Easing the ring up, he slowly unfurled it over the hard flesh, stroking at the sac curled up tight between Changmin's legs. Gilding Min's shaft was a pleasure, kissing him afterwards was a mind-blowing experience Se7en would hold onto for the rest of his life.

"Thank you." The young man whispered, placing his hand on Se7en's shoulder and gently pushing him back against the pillows. "My turn now."

The gel was cold on Min's fingers, a tingling sensation working from the tips down to the webbing of his palm. He was tempted to taste it, stopped by his realization that Se7en was leaning back against the headboard and

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waiting for him. Glancing over at his lover, Min's heart stopped, gazing on the long, lean muscular body that was waiting for him.

His eyes were drawn to the smooth lines of his lover's chest, powerful and sleek beneath golden satin skin. Se7en's long legs were pulled up, his hands resting on his thighs, waiting for Min to move forward. The strength of Se7en's jaw was a lure for Min's mouth, begging for the touch of a hot kiss. Reaching forward with his dry fingers, Changmin traced out the wings of Se7en's tattoo, lifting up his torso until he rested his weight on his knees. He kissed the inked cleft, treasuring the visible bond of their careers.

"If I forget to tell you, I love you." Changmin whispered against Se7en's arm, licking at the man's skin.

"I love you too, baby." Se7en kissed his lover's forehead, his head bent forward and hidden in the shadows.

Changmin's fingers were shaking as he reached down between his lover's legs, tentatively feeling at the juncture of Se7en's body. Easing forward with his shoulders against Se7en's chest, Min whispered a soft apology into the other man's ear, asking for patience as he stumbled through their lovemaking.

"Baby, take your time." Se7en murmured, kissing his lover's mouth. "Ease into it. Ease into me."

The heat of Se7en's body was nearly too much for Min to handle. Just sliding the first tip of his finger into the moistness made his knees weak and his arms trembled with the power he had. Se7en leaned his head back against the headboard, his mouth open and drawing in staggered breaths.

He'd missed the fullness of having a lover inside of him, the aching width of another man piercing up into his core. Se7en forced his hips to be still, lifting his rear up onto a pillow and splaying his legs apart. Changmin moved in closer, entranced by the man's promised warmth.

A single push and Min's finger slid partly in, earning him a tortured hiss from Se7en's beautiful mouth. With his strong chin tilted back, Se7en's throat was a beacon for Min's lips. The young man's teeth nipped along the tanned column, the slight agonies pulling tiny moans up from the older man's belly.

Min reached for the lube, opening the bottle with a flick and pouring it over the fingers he had brushing against Se7en's entrance. Hitting their heated skin, the gel tingled, running slick over Min's palm. Bending forward, the young man licked along the cut line of Se7en's abdomen, dragging his teeth along each tight muscle clenched across the other's belly.

The feeling of Se7en around his finger made Min tear up, his eyes misting with the extent of trust extended to him by his lover. The tightness

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around the entrance was nothing compared to the heavier pressure of the inner ring buried a little further in, Se7en's body pushing slightly outwards to accept Min's entrance.

"Where do I go?" Changmin whispered, reaching up into Se7en's body, twisting his finger in. Seeing the pleasure flooding his lover's face, he tentatively slide another finger into the hot channel, pushing in deeper. "How do I make you squirm like you make me, Shichi? How do I show you the stars I see?"

"Push your fingers up towards my stomach." Se7en grunted, his hands reaching for Min's slender shoulders. His fingers gripped the other man tightly, his mouth open and panting as Min explored his depths. "Reach up and forward. God, baby, there... that's it. God."

It felt like a small rise of flesh under Min's fingertips, each stroke against the bulging kernel making Se7en's body twitch and jump. He was smug when he realized Se7en's heft was hard and stiff above his hand, the tip leaking a milky drop and threatening to release more.

Bending his head down, Changmin licked tentatively at first, then more boldly, suckling at the head of his lover's sex. Se7en arched his hips up, driving deep into Min's mouth and up against the rise of his lover's throat, unable to hold back his need to have Min around him.

"Baby..." Groaning as he writhed, Se7en let his hands fist into Min's hair, drawing the young man's head up his shaft. Min shivered at the tiny splash of spiced sweetness on his tongue, swallowing a taste of his lover.

"Need me yet?" Changmin pulled free of Se7en's shaft, leaving a trail of wetness over the taut head. "Want me now?"

"Baby, I've wanted you for so long." The older man panted, capturing Min's mouth with his own. "Want you. Badly. Now."

Changmin kissed his lover's shoulder as Se7en turned over, a pillow lifting the older man's hips up, pushing his shoulders down into the bed's tangled linens. The sheets smelled of Min's seed and sweat, a heady aroma that filled Se7en's senses. It had been a long time since he'd been entered, the last time nearly so long ago he couldn't remember who he let into him.

It seemed right to have Changmin be someone he let in.

He'd already allowed the young man into more than just his body up until now. This would complete their bond, sealing the love they shared. More importantly, Min drove him insane enough to want the press of the man's sex deep inside of his guts, stroking at the core of his pleasure until they both came hard against and in one another.

Changmin parted Se7en's thighs, guiding his fingers back down to the hidden pout between Se7en's cheeks. Grasping his shaft, he placed the tip

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of his cock against his lover's hot entrance, bending forward to kiss the span of skin between Se7en's shoulder blades. The oil at the hole's pout slid around his sex's head, Min nearly sliding up into the curled up heft of Se7en's sac.

"Take your time, Minku." Se7en murmured. "Don't rush yourself."

"I want to." Changmin murmured, his hips rocking forward as he slid the tip of his head past the initial ring of Se7en's entrance. The breach proved pleasurable, evident from Se7en's ratcheting moan and thrusting tilt of his rear, his body trying to plunge Min in deeper. "Let me do this for you, Shichi. Let me make you feel like you make me feel."

It was so easy to fall into the heat of his lover's body, Min realized in the back of his mind. Se7en fit around him tightly, the rub of volcanic flesh around his cock making him insane with desire. Even knowing the erotic pleasures of Se7en's skilled mouth didn't prepare Min for the sensuality of having Se7en clasping his entire shaft, the man's muscular body flexing and tightening over him.

He nearly lost control before he started. The sensations working over his shaft were almost too much to bear. Gritting his teeth, Min willed himself to hold off, gritting his teeth with the struggle.

Se7en's hips rocking up to start the rhythm of their thrusts undermined his efforts and Changmin spiraled into the dark pleasure of pushing himself hard into his lover's gripping body. Reaching forward, Min fought to find some purchase on his lover's moving body.

Min's hands roamed over Se7en's shoulders and neck, wrapping fingers into the black silk of the other man's hair, pulling his head back and exposing the long line of his lover's throat. Min's teeth made short work of Se7en's soft skin, biting large nips into his mouth and sucking hard as his shaft buried into the other man's body.

He leaned his head back, thrusting harder as Se7en's body tightened. Gasping, Changmin moaned, his mind shrinking down into a single point, all focused on reaching something inside of Se7en that he couldn't explain how he knew was there. A promise of something dusky and golden, nearly outside of Min's reach but a tantalizing treasure if he worked hard enough.

He planned on working more than hard enough to spill open Se7en's pleasure.

The bed creaked, abused springs complaining as they moved, rocking the mattress nearly off the platform as Min struggled to find a pace that suited them both. A shift in Se7en's body proved advantageous, the older man releasing a high pitched keening when Changmin's shaft slid up against his tight bundle of nerves hidden deep inside of him.

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Se7en raised his back end up, pressing down further into the linens. He couldn't catch his breath, struggling to absorb the emotions overwhelming his mind. His soul was near bursting, the feel of Min inside of him drawing out every scramble of sound he could come up with, leaving him with only the tiny guttural mewls nesting at the back of his throat.

The sky crackled outside, a storm at the horizon. Se7en heard the roll of thunder hit the city, unsure if it was real or something in his body that had leaked out and touched the stars. All he could feel was Min's body and the air hot between their pressed forms. Then the sharp tang of his lover's teeth against his tattoo when Changmin bit down into the inked flesh.

Se7en felt the power of the storm in Min's mouth, and he surrendered to it, allowing his body to be swept up under the younger man's thrusts. Changmin pounded against him, torrents of emotions slamming into them with each rocking motion of their coupling.

Refusing to let go of his lover's body, Changmin rubbed his cheek along Se7en's sweaty shoulder, trying to soak up every memory he made with the older man, drenching his mind with Se7en's scent and feel. He wanted to carry this moment forever, holding its heat in his heart for the cold days when he sat alone in the dark, hoping for the purr of the other man's voice to lift his spirits.

If he could only hold onto something of Se7en's soul, Min knew he would never feel loneliness again.

Lightning struck between them, scattering their thoughts under the heat of their joining. Gasping, Min felt the build up in his body, working up from the root of his shaft and spreading into the fire along his stomach. Reaching down, he needed to have Se7en in his hand, finding the other man's hardness with his fingers. Running along the veined flesh, Min worked his palm down the length, stroking upwards with each thrust he gave Se7en's core.

The moist gush of Se7en's release struck Min's hand, splashing through his fingers and over the mound of his grip. He couldn't hold back any longer, the scent of his lover's sweetness filling the air. Tumbling down onto Se7en's over-warm body, Min's shaft worked into a spasm, jerking deep against the curve of Se7en's tightness, prolonging each stroke with a trembling hardness.

In the moment of his release, the world turned black for Changmin, all light falling down around him in a shower of sparks that he could imagine touching if only he had the strength to lift his hand away from his lover. He had neither the strength nor the desire to ever let Se7en go. Not for the promise of all the stars he could hold in his hand. Min knew he possessed the only light that could illuminate his soul.



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A steady moonlight-scented glow fueled by the love the older man had for him, a love Changmin no longer doubted or feared.

The darkness ended, filling back up with the world, small slivers falling back into place around him, the feel of Se7en's body heaving with deep breaths under his stomach. Kissing the older man's shoulder blades, Min carefully eased himself free, knowing he should work the condom off of his softening shaft but the languor that struck him was nearly paralyzing, and the scent of Se7en's flesh on his too intoxicating to comprehend.

Se7en reached for Min, helping him get tidy before wrapping his arms around the young man's waist, drawing him close. They lay against one another, belly to belly, their legs a loose weave over the abused bedding. Smiling, the young man kissed his lover's nose, moving onto Se7en's swollen-kissed mouth.

"Baby...damn." Se7en shook his head, caressing Min's face with trembling fingers. "You just make me feel so much. Thank you."

"Love you, Shichi." Changmin felt the tug of sleep on his eyes, lulled from the warmth of their bodies and his lover's kisses. "I do you know. Love you. So very much."

"I love you too, baby." Se7en replied. "How could I not? You're my angel."

# 37

A mist fell over Seoul, the promised torrential downpour a few hours away. The storm was taking its time to move in, leaving the lovers surrounded by haven of fog on Se7en's balcony. Tucked under an awning made of steel and clouded glass, Se7en held Changmin in his lap, the young man sitting sideways with his lover, a broad papa-san chair cradling their woven together bodies.

Se7en's strong fingers were marbled with sticky bits of pinched together cheesecake, offering handheld bites for Changmin to suck off of him. The older man followed the cheesecake sliding into Min's mouth, chasing the sweet with his tongue.

"Your kiss makes the cheesecake taste sour." Changmin tried to keep a straight face but his words sounded cheesy, even to his inexperienced ears. Choking on the kiss, he doubled over, laughing until he needed to take a breath.

"That was horrible." Se7en agreed, grinning at his lover's broad smile. "Aish, haven't I taught you anything?"

"It's harder to do than it sounds." Min complained. "You do it so easily. I'm not smooth enough. Let me try again."

"Okay," Se7en agreed, digging his fingers into the dessert, holding up another morsel for the young man. "Here you go, baby."

The kiss that followed was as creamy as the sweet, a loving, tender exploration of Min's mouth. They shared the tangy dessert between their lips, the rain softly pouring a few feet away. Se7en's tongue was a sensual rake over Min's teeth and palate, his fingers raised to stroke Changmin's jaw. Pulling back, Se7en left Changmin nearly breathless, the older man's hands roaming down over his lover's back, hooking his fingers into the other's waistband.

"Okay, now I can't think." Min swallowed. "I'm going to have to do that again."

"I think you just want more cheesecake."

"And the kisses," Shifting his rear, Min slid over Se7en's hips, earning him a tender, warning moan. Bending forward, Min licked at a speck of

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cheesecake he'd left on the man's full mouth, tracing the slant of Se7en's upper lip with his tongue. "Don't forget the kisses."

"How could I forget the kisses?" Se7en slid his fingers past the drawstring of Min's loose cotton pants. He nuzzled along Min's neck, tasting nearly every inch of his lover's throat. He enjoyed the feel of Min's downy skin under his palm, his index finger stroking small caresses over the flat span above Min's rear. "I like the kisses most of all."

"The kisses are very nice." He responded with a murmur, resting his head on Se7en's shoulder. "You're very nice, too."

Min curled against his lover, purring under Se7en's touch. The patter of rain overhead was as intimate as the older man's mouth, a brushing mist soft against his skin. His stomach delightfully content with what he'd been fed from Se7en's fingers, Min listened to the storm's approach, watching the sky's light up with white streaks over the nearby hills.

"Do you remember what I told you the first time I saw you out here?" Se7en broke the companionable silence between them, his fingers making lazy circles up and down Min's back.

Changmin shook his head, scarcely believing he'd once stood on this balcony and thought Se7en's presence left him unaffected. Now he couldn't even see the number seven without shivering in response, his body reacting to the memory of the other man's hands and mouth exploring entire stretches of his body. His lover sometimes took minutes licking at one spot just to, in Se7en's words, to be sure that he could remember Min's flavours when they were parted.

God, I was a fool; Min thought, staring at his lover's profile.

"I told you that I never noticed how pretty you were." Se7en murmured. "I was a fucking idiot. Just so you know, that was possibly the stupidest thing that I've ever said in my life."

Min bit back his laughter, hearing his own voice in his lover's words. Drawing in Se7en's scent into his lungs, Changmin murmured under his breath, a nonsensical reassurance that he loved the other man despite his stupidity.

"You were so young and that scared me a bit. I saw you and said; Damn, I can get off just by imagining you underneath me. That's as far as I let myself think about you. Because shit, you were so damned gorgeous against the sky that I wanted you so much." He continued, staring out at the mist-shrouded city. "The truth was, I don't think I was ready for how much you affected me. You're like an addiction, Minku. One small little taste and then, suddenly my veins were crawling with wanting you."

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“That’s not very romantic. You make me sound like a drug. You’re addicted to me.” Min replied casually, flattening his mouth in mock displeasure. Reaching for the plate balanced on the chair’s cushion, he scooped up a finger-breadth of cheesecake, dangling it over Se7en’s mouth. “You get to try again.”

Se7en took his time laving off the sweet concoction, the tip of his tongue dipping small tidbits free. Sucking at the line of Min’s pressed together fingers, he left a moistness that he suckled clean with a ravening ferocity, flattening his tongue against Min’s palm before he pulled back.

Changmin let a moan slither from his throat. He no longer cared if Se7en knew that his tongue shattered all of Min’s control.

“You want romantic, Minku?” Se7en pressed a kiss on his lover’s mouth, the young man’s face resting near the curve of his throat. The weight of Min’s head on his shoulder was a comfortable burden, the heat of Min’s long body keeping his heart skipping with desire. “I don’t know. You’re asking for a lot.”

“I want to know what’s in your heart, Shichi.” Changmin whispered, his eyes dark with the swell of their pleasure. “You’ve already told me that everything there is mine. I want it. Now.”

“What’s in my heart?” He reflected on the past months he’d spent both loving and fighting with the younger man. If he’d known where he’d be after he first approached Changmin on the balcony, Se7en knew he would have spent less time stewing over his anger and more time loving the young man’s sweet soul.

“When I followed you out here onto this balcony, I think my heart was whispering into my soul, leading me around like I was a puppet.” Se7en admitted. “It was dry and parched. Like a cracked, barren desert. Even in sand, some things grow and people think ah, such perseverance. They admire adversity and strength but the beauty is sparse.”

“You came into my life and I fought wanting to love you. Tooth and nail, Minku. I didn’t want to fall in love with you.” Min’s eyelashes fluttered up against Se7en’s jaw, not surprised to hear of the other’s reluctance. “I didn’t want you to have my heart. My friendship, yes. I wanted to give that.”

“I can tell you the exact moment I fell in love with who you were.” Se7en leaned his head against the papa-san cushion, thinking back to the time he’d trailed Min from his apartment to the tea shop.

He’d never told the young man how he’d really found him, lost amid the Tokyo crowd. He’d wandered around, aimless, and found himself standing outside of the Dong Bang’s building. When Min exited the front door a few minutes later, Se7en decided serendipity led him to where he needed to be.

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“You’d just ordered blooming tea and the fragrance was so pungent, a raspberry spice that reminded me of your thoughts.” He continued to stroke at Min’s spine, making the young man purr softly with each pass of his hand. “I watched you for a long time. I don’t think you saw me when you came out of the building.”

“No,” Min admitted. “That’s kind of... I don’t know if it’s stalker-like or romantic.”

“Go for romantic. It looks better for me that way.” Se7en laughed. “I was thinking about what I was going to do about you. I wanted to either have more of you or less of you. Being around you was driving me insane and I needed some kind of guidance to figure out where we were going to go.”

“See, little by little, you were everywhere I turned. In my thoughts, in my heart. Everywhere, Minku.” He said, slowly. Unsure on how to express what was in his mind at the time, Se7en forged ahead. “I sat and watched you and then as the world moved around you, I saw you dream.”

“You’re the first person who I actually could see dream. Your gorgeous face reflected entire universes and the sighs on your mouth were like distant exotic fruits ripened under warm suns. You held so much potential and your hands were open towards me, offering me dreams you’d concocted in your soul as easily as some people might breathe.”

“And baby, I wanted your dreams for me more than anything else.” He rubbed his cheek against Min’s, letting the friction of their bodies bring up their mingled scents. “You’re gossamer wings on my soul, breathing life into a wasteland I’d sucked dry with my ambition. I forgot what it was like to wonder. Everything in my life was focused in tight, telescoped down only what I wanted, regardless of what else was out there.”

“And there you were, dreaming. You dream for other people, you take their lives and weave in possibilities. I ached for that. I ached to have you do that for me.” Se7en whispered. “I’m not sure if I’m making any fucking sense with this, Minku. But that’s when I fell in love with you. When I saw you turn and your face said, in that instant, that your heart and soul held for me too. Secret, loving dreams.”

“I began to love you so fucking much, right then and there.” He said, letting go of the breath he’d held in. “And while it might not be romantic, it’s the truth. That’s when I fell in love with you. That’s when I realized that love wasn’t something that I had to miss out on.”

“Now, what’s in your heart, my tenshi?”

“My heart? You’re in my heart. You take up all of the space there. You make it beat.” Min whispered, his breath hot on Se7en’s neck. “I needed a friend. That’s what I think I was really looking for.”

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“Ah, a friend.” He murmured. “That’s just so...plain.”

“Stop it.” Changmin slapped at Se7en’s stomach, reaching under his t-shirt to tickle at his ribs.

“Well, you have four friends. Really good ones. What did you need one more for?”

“Because you’re mine.” He replied, softly touching Se7en’s poignant smile. “I don’t have to share you with anyone.”

“You are like an imaginary friend. Someone that a child plays with and loses when they grow up.”

“Ah, so now I’m not real.” Se7en teased, kissing the frown forming on Min’s forehead.

“Baka.” Min growled, protesting the faint taunt. “I had a lot of imaginary friends when I was growing up. You were like a piece of me that I left behind that came back to me. Something brave and daring. Naughty. I love that about you. You make me feel like I’m free.”

“When we began,” Changmin refused to put a word on their bond, avoiding a label for the insanity that kept him balanced. “Everything that I’ve kept inside of me suddenly came out in a rush of words. I didn’t have to hide even the stupidest of my ideas because you listened to me and asked me how I got there or what was on my mind.”

“No one but you listens like that, Shichi.” Changmin said with a sigh. “You give me wings to soar on. You built them out of scraps of your soul and put them on my shoulder blades. Then pushed me off the cliff and told me I could fly.”

“You can fly, Minku.” He reassured his lover, wiping at the tear silvering Min’s right cheek. “There isn’t a cloud in the world that shouldn’t fear your fingers along its belly.”

“I know. And that’s what’s so frustrating. Because I was walling myself up. I did this to myself but then you came along and hammered me out of the prison I made.” Min explained. “I feel like all of the doubts that I had inside of me were just seared away. Each time you kissed me, you took its weight from me and changed it into a feather.”

“I used to think that nothing I did in the group was really going to matter because I was shoved behind the others.” Min confessed.

“Baby, you’re worth as much if not more than the other four.” His lover protested, shushed by Min’s fingers.

“I know that now. Well, not more than them but I’m not less of a person than any of them.” Changmin sighed, wrapping his arm about Se7en’s trim waist. The moisture in the air hid the sting of tears threatening his eyes, the

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world watery from the sighs in his heart. “You make me feel like I’m the most important person in the world. Even when you’re pissed off at me, you love me.”

“I’ve always been afraid that if I got someone angry at me, they’ll not like me anymore. You gave me a relationship that I could be free to make mistakes in. That my entire life wasn’t hanging in the balance if I made a wrong step or said something badly.”

“I felt like I needed to prove myself in everything.” Min turned, inching over until he lay his back against Se7en’s stomach, one of his favourite positions. The older man’s arms immediately reached around him, cuddling Min close, one hand on Min’s belly. “I don’t feel like I have to do that anymore.”

“You’re like a mirror for me. Every time I think something bad about myself, you hold up what you think is the truth, trying to show me what you see. I love you for that. For reminding me that I’m special, even if it’s only something between us, you make me feel unique.”

“I love you, Choi Dong-Wook.” Changmin tilted his head back, capturing Se7en’s gaze. “I love you. I love Shichi and I don’t even mind that cocky bastard, Se7en because that’s the part of you that pushes me up into the sky.”

“You hold me up, Shichi.” He released the last of his words, letting them drift into the moist night.

“I like holding you down too, Minku.” Se7en growled, sliding Min to the side, he turned over to trap the younger man’s writhing body against the vibrant rust fabric. His hands pulled at Min’s drawstrings, undoing the small bow at his waist then tugging the fabric off of his lover’s hips. His own sweats fell to the stone tiles, their legs flopping into the encroaching puddles spreading across the terrace. Their shirts followed, tossed aside in the frantic need for each other’s skin.

With the rain starting to pound at the overhead frosted glass, Se7en stole into his lover’s warmth, the young man’s mouth filled with the other man’s kiss. Holding one another close, they lay tightly entwined, listening to the tempest rage around them. They cuddled, hidden behind the clouds falling down from the hills.

“Thank you for loving me, Minku.” Se7en whispered, holding Changmin’s nude body against him. “You are the most incredible gift that I’ve ever gotten.”

“Thank you for unwrapping me, Shichi.” Min replied, kissing the spot above his lover’s heart. “And thank you for giving me this. I promise, I’ll take good care of it.”

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“It’s yours, baby.” Dong-Wook smiled down into Min’s soft gaze. “Always yours.”



# Letters Between Lovers

# Tarnished Angels

## Tarnished Angels

Hey baby,

You're asleep right now. I don't know when you are going to find this but right now, you're asleep next to me. We've just spent the night making love for the first time and then well, you needed a little help sleeping so of course, I was more than happy to spend a few minutes working the edge off of you.

I'm sitting here with the taste of you and chocolate mochi ice cream in my mouth, watching you sleep. You look so peaceful, and God, so fucking sexy. I just want to crawl over you and have you again.

But I can't. Because I know it would hurt you. And baby, that's the last thing that I want to do. I never ever want to hurt you.

I can't say that I won't. I'm an asshole. I know that. You know that. Hell, most of the world knows that but you do make me better than I am. I don't know if I've told you that, but you do.

Before I woke us both up (and I have no regrets for doing that because I got to hear those little kitten noises that you make in your throat when I have you in my mouth), I actually had a dream.

I can't tell you the last time that I fell asleep and I had a dream. You know I don't sleep a lot. And I've lost the ability to carry my mind off to somewhere else a long time ago. I think your love for me gave my mind just the smallest taste of flight and it felt so damned good.

This dream of mine was kind of weird, mostly it was me sitting at a table. I'm not even sure where I was but it was a nice table and there were people walking by. Gorgeous laughing people and I looked at them and I knew who they were. Not everything but just tidbits that made me smile. Someone came by and served me a glass of wine and when I turned, I could feel you nearby. I couldn't see you but I could feel you. I knew then that I was waiting for you. Somehow I knew that somewhere you were there and you were heading towards me.

When I woke up, you were there beside me, your eyes closed and your face so beautiful in the evening light. I hated waking you. But I hated not having your kiss even more.

I'm going to be stuck in Korea for a couple of days. And since I don't know when you're getting this, because you have entire countries lost someplace in that backpack of yours, I wanted to tell you that I love you. I loved you the moment I turned and saw that gorgeous

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face against the Seoul skyline, even though I tried to tell myself that it was only going to be sex.

And then I fell in love with you when you blushed under my kiss. How the fuck was I supposed to know that your beautiful face would be my downfall? That mouth, God fucking damn that mouth. I want to drink wine from your mouth. To eat food from you. Every thing that I've ever stolen from your lips has tasted like Heaven.

You're my angel, Minku. No matter what happens in the world and around us, you are my angel. I wish I could be yours but I think my wings are tarnished nearly black from my sinning and rusted shut. I hope that I don't rub any of it off on you. If anything, you've made me think I could fly again, even as chained down to the ground as I am, you make me feel like I can soar.

Just from your touch. Just from your mouth. And certainly from your smile.

Get some sleep, baby. Please. I intend to keep you up for a very long time when I get back.

Love,

Your Shichi.

## Tarnished Angels

Dear Shichi,

I know you're busy but I wanted to drop you a note so you knew that someone was missing you. Because I do miss you, although you know what it's like to work all the time. We have hardly any time to ourselves and even to think. Sometimes I swear I have just left the dance studio and then I'm turned around and back in it again.

It probably would be better if I was a better dancer but I'm not. It's not that I don't try. I do. Some things are hard to keep track of like my feet. Yunho said that it's because I'm still growing and that my body is either still adjusting to where I was or trying to adjust to where I'm going. Joongie-ah says that I'm just distracted because there are places my body and mind would rather be.

I'd have to agree with him. My body and mind would rather be with you.

God, do you know how hard that is to write? You're a distraction when you're in Japan and one outside of it. I can't win. But I think I am winning because you are my distraction.

And don't tease. You know how embarrassed I get. Just say thank you and that you know I'm being complimentary. Which I am. Mostly.

Our schedule has been crazy. We're doing interviews and photo shoots nearly every day as we prepare for the album to come out. It's kind of scary. I don't know why but it is different than when we're at home. I guess I expect people to forgive us our mistakes more at home. Here I feel like if I make a mistake, I'm letting down so many people. It makes me want to try that much harder until I just want to sit in the corner and cry.

Don't tell anyone that I cry. Or want to cry. Or that I admit it. But sometimes I want to. Not because I'm sad but because it's so overwhelming that it's the only release I feel like I have. It's that or screaming and that would be a strain on my voice. I don't want to ruin or crack my voice because I can't handle pressure.

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Why am I bothering you with this? I should talk to you about how much I miss you and what I've done since I've seen you last.

Okay, what is exciting that I can talk to you about? Ah, I had sea cucumber the other day. We were on a show and I had to taste it. It was horrid but none of us can say that. Well, Yoochun can say things like that because somehow people forgive him when he's rude. I have to figure out how that works because there are times when I really want to be rude but I feel obligated to be nice.

Sea cucumber is one of those things that I'd rather be rude on.

I'm going to host the radio shows a lot. They were talking about how we were doing with our Japanese and my name came up as one of the more solid speakers in the group. I wasn't sure how to respond to that. Mostly because I think I still see myself as someone standing behind Yunho and Jaegoo. The hyungs have reminded me that no, I am standing besides them. That I have to remember that.

I shall remember that. I know I hear your voice whispering into my ear that I am standing there. Thank you for that. Over the sea I can hear you.

I miss you so much. I know we talk on the phone but what I miss the most is just sitting next to you and doing things while you're working or just sitting someplace and eating ice cream and watching people. I miss watching people with you. I miss your stories about them. They're so much more interesting than mine. I like that your stories have fantastical elements in them. Although the one about the man being possessed by plastic play dinosaurs nearly killed me when I choked on that ice cube. So please, don't try to kill me again. It will be a hard thing to explain when you return my body to SM.

This is getting long and I should wrap it up, especially since I'm going to have to go to rehearsal soon. Again. Still. Because we do live to sing. And I am sincere about that. I love doing it. I love the feeling it gives me. Those goose bumps when things are just right between the five of us.

I miss you giving me goose bumps too.

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Please eat. Drink water. And if you have time, think of me.

Love and Peace,

Minku.

## Tarnished Angels

Hello my Minku,

I'm not sure what time it is. Hell, I'm not sure what day it is. I've said that before. It's still true. I only know that I got your letter this afternoon and in the middle of possibly one of the crappiest days I've had in a long time, suddenly the world tilted upright and there was sunshine and birds singing.

No really, I heard some birds. I could have sworn it.

Right now, it's about three in the morning and I've been home for about half an hour. I'm sure I have to be someplace in a couple of hours and I'm thinking that maybe I should just not sleep and stumble in half-dead. That would show them, wouldn't it?

Can't you tell that I'm dead tired? I'm not even making any sense.

My apartment is empty without you. I'm sitting here in the living room, laying back on the couch with a cold beer and watching the rain hit the floor of the balcony. If I look hard enough, I can see the memory of you caught in time against the mists of the rain. I can barely make out the city behind the water. All I can see in it is your face and that expression you had on it when I first approached you.

No, not that disgusted look you gave me. The first one, that dreaming, stare off into the night look. The one that makes me wish I could see the world through your eyes.

Don't deny being slightly disgusted at being interrupted from your thoughts. I know you well enough to say that now. I wondered what you were thinking then. And if you just wanted to peel yourself out of the party and head back to your own world.

Had I been smart, I would have told you some lie about a great coffee shop that we could go to and talk about music or books. Not that going there to talk would have been a lie but rather the great coffee shop because I honestly don't know one that is particularly great.

How can my apartment be empty without you when you've only been here that one time? And not even long enough for me to have you pressed up against the wall for a kiss?

I'll remedy that. Just so you know. We'll be taking care of that soon.

God I fucking miss you so damned much. This far away shit is sometimes just too much. I know that we don't see one another for days but this is different. I'm not sure why. Possibly because we were



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together that night as one and my body misses your warmth, my heart misses having your breath on my chest. I know my soul misses your laughter and shyness. I know I miss your stories.

You'll have to tell me one in your next letter. Something to help me sleep. A letter that I can fold over and over again and leave in my wallet.

I'm so damned tired right now. I can feel just everything hanging so heavy on me and I feel like I should be ashamed at how worn out I am. People have jobs because of me. I am responsible for people's lives. I try to tell myself that being Se7en really is my responsibility and that if it wasn't me here doing these things, then it would be someone else. I think I remember that the most when I'm standing on stage and I can hear the fans just off the edge of the lights, screaming my name. It's then when I realize that I don't belong to just me. I belong to them too.

That's when I'm ashamed for thinking that I'm tired. When I remember the sounds of those voices, that's when I tell myself to go harder and be better. I feel guilty for resting then.

I refuse to feel guilty for missing you.

You are such a big part of my life. My friend. My lover. A slice of heaven and peace that I draw on when I need strength. Just the thought of you makes me stronger.

I sing to you, Minku. When I'm in the studio, it's your face that I see. And there are some lyrics that I think, God this is how I'd feel if Minku turned his back on me and I get angry and spit those words out.

So I should apologize to you for the things that I've said at your image in my mind. Would it make you feel better if I told you I've also whispered how much I've loved you and want to feel you on my body? Because I've sung those things too, baby.

Actually, I think I've sung those things more because there was a moment in the studio today when I started to sing about starting to fall in love and I had to stop because I heard your voice whispering into my soul and the cries you made against my throat when we made love.

It was so much in my head. Everything was just as sharp as that night when you were against me and all of a sudden the room

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around me became like a memory and the thought of you was the reality.

God, how many times can I tell you that I miss you? How can I tell you how much I hurt inside because there's a piece of me that I left with you? How the hell do I survive the day without hearing your voice? Because missing your phone calls kill me. I hate checking my phone to find a voice mail from you and know that I can't call you back because you're as busy as I am.

Thank you for calling me today and singing to me. That just, fuck, that minute was so special. And it was everything I could do not to just stand there and listen to it over and over again. I listened to it when I read your letter.

Don't I sound like some sort of lovesick Min-fan? I'm okay with that. I plan on stalking you when I get home. Because home is where I can find you to touch you. I've discovered that.

I'm going to send a few things with this letter. Small things that I think would make you happy.

One of them is a beanie I've been wearing lately. I thought I'd share it with you because well, I like the thought of something I had on my body on yours. If I could send a bite on your neck through the mail, I would.

Another is a notebook I found in a store. It reminded me of you. The poetry on the top of each page is about goals and ambitions and struggles to be true to yourself. That's the thing I want for you most, Minku. I want you to look back on your life and say, I lived as I believed and felt.

Because, baby, that is the person is I love.

I'm going to sleep now. Well, sleep has come for me and is going to kick my ass if I don't listen to it.

I'll tell you again that I miss you. Still. More even than when I started this letter because I can still see you on the balcony in my mind's eye. It is like you are here but I cannot touch you.

At least in my dreams, I can feel you under my hands. So sleep is a very welcome thing right now.

Love you. Sing your guts out and make me proud.

Your Shichi.

## Tarnished Angels

Hello Shichi baby,

That's hard to write without be embarrassed. I felt my face heat up when I wrote it. Isn't that silly? We have the afternoon off and I thought; Ah, I should see what Dong-wook is doing but then I remembered that you're away.

It started raining a little bit afterward, taking away the sunshine. I'm glad the sky feels as sad as I do that you're not here.

The apartment is empty. All of the others are gone and it's quiet, which is very rare for this place. I never realized how loud we were until I was with you in your apartment. The silence was peaceful.

Here, the silence is deafening.

I sound like a lovesick cow. I've fallen in love with a tree that I can only reach some of the time when I'm herded into the same pasture that it grows in. I miss its shade and its peaceful feeling when the wind brushes through its leaves.

I miss the coolness of your shade on the heat of my body.

I miss hearing the whispers of clouds in your voice.

Mostly, I miss having you nearby to talk to. I think I like touching you when we talk, even if it's just our hands or our shoulders. It's like I can feel the world under you, holding us both up.

Without you to touch, I feel like I am falling into a nothingness underneath me.

Your voice every night is a rope that I can grab onto. The memory of your voice is the wind holding me up so I don't fall too quickly.

I wish you would come back soon so I can have the world underneath me again and my footing would be surer.

I just wish you would come back so I can touch you when we talk.

I just wish you would come back so I can touch you.

## Tarnished Angels

I just wish you would come back.

...

I can't write any more. It's too quiet here and suddenly I am alone in my heart.

I shouldn't say that. I know that you're there. I know the hyungs are there. I just am feeling sorry for myself and being maudlin. I should stop being maudlin!

The beanie is huge! You have a big head! Aish, must be that ego, Iro. Your head needs room for that ego and brain of yours. I have to fold it up a few times for it to fit. Jaegoong told me that I was wearing it wrong and unfolded it once and pulled it down over my eyebrows.

I felt silly until I found the sunglasses you left in my backpack. Well, the sunglasses that were lost in my backpack and we couldn't find. I found them. After I put them on, everything seemed right.

I even sang a few bars of Crazy for Jaegoong. I made him laugh because I couldn't hold the notes without giggling. It's hard to pretend to be you.

Even harder to pretend not to be with you.

Ah, maudlin again. I will shove that back down where it belongs.

What else to tell you?

Oh! Junsu did something that reminded me of you. He made rice the other night and forgot to put water in the pot before he turned it on. The rice cooked and then turned black on the bottom. I had to laugh because it reminded me of the pot that sacrificed itself for our dinner. Then I remembered, I did that. Not you.

But now, you are forever linked to burnt rice in my mind.

We ate out. The house smelled. It needed airing out and the taste of the food was ruined by the scorch smell.

I went to the Ueno Zoo the other day. We were doing a small meet and greet with some other musicians. It was very busy and there were so

## Tarnished Angels

many people. So I snuck off and went to see the fennec foxes. They were near by at the entrance and where we were eating lunch. I skipped most of lunch to see the foxes.

They have such big ears! And goofy smiles. You are definitely a fennec fox. You even look like a byakko. Okay, so your ears aren't that big. But maybe that is what you are hiding behind this beanie. Your ears!

I can feel myself getting sad again. So I'm going to end this letter and send it off. I don't want your thoughts of me to be of sadness. I want you to think of how much laughter you give me. Because your silly faces keep my spirits lifted.

I have the pictures you sent me still on my camera. If you continue to squish your nose against the lens, it's going to stick that way. I should warn you about that. My mother used to say that to me.

I miss you. I love you.

Hurry home. The spot besides me is empty.

Minku.

## Tarnished Angels

Hello my Minku,

I'm glad you found my sunglasses. Those were one of my favourite pairs. Even more so now that I know you're wearing them.

You owe me a story about people you see. You didn't tell me one in your last letter. Not that I missed it as much as I missed you. I swear I could feel one of your kisses on the paper.

I don't know if I see you as a lovesick cow. But I like being a tree. Ah, look how strong and stately I am. Unless of course I'm a bonsai in which case I am a midget sitting on your desk begging for drops of mist. Be sure to mist me, baby. I can't think of a better water for my parched roots than the moisture from your mouth.

And if that sounds dirty, then I know I've got it right.

Do you remember when we walked down by the river that one afternoon and we had to duck under a bridge? I leaned over to kiss you and there were people running across the bridge over us, laughing. We kissed to the soundtrack of their joy. It was like they were celebrating our kiss, you told me that then. Now every time I walk across a bridge, I want to laugh, just to celebrate our kisses.

I walked across a bridge today. That's why I thought of it. Taebin was with me. We'd just come from having some lunch and he asked me why I was smiling.

How do you tell your best friend that you've found love? How do I tell my best friend that he's got to make some room in my heart because you've moved in?

I realize that you've had to deal with that yourself.

I promise Tae won't punch you in the face. Of course you'd never be as much of an ass as I was so I'm sure you're even safer than I imagine. Although Tae did say that I was lucky I got to you first.

It appears that I wasn't the only one who's been looking your way and wanting you. Okay, this wasn't about having you. We us what we have is about loving one another and friendship.

But damned if I'm not a guy and still want to gloat. What? I'm allowed to gloat. No?

I can see that curl of your lip. Put it down. I won't gloat. But I will smile smugly whenever someone around me comments that you're hot. I gotta be allowed that at least.

## Tarnished Angels

I was going to see how far I could get into this letter before I told you I missed you. Then I just read back and found out that I said it within a few sentences. So, there you have it. I have no willpower where you're concerned.

It's nice to be in Korea but everything sounds so different. After so long of being in Japan, it takes a while for my mind to shift over to a different language. I sometimes dream in Japanese now. I wonder if it's going to be like that when I start getting serious about English.

Are you going to learn English with me? Or are you going to depend on Yoochun and his bad Konglish? I heard him saying something in a telecast a bit ago and I laughed because I could hear you imitating Junsu complaining about Yoochun's Korean.

Of course that makes me self-conscious about my own Korean. I'm sure I'm as lazy as anyone else. I should strive to be better spoken. Or at least swear less.

You and I both know that's not going to happen. So long as I behave on camera, I'll be okay.

By the way, how goes the plans for your tour? I know you guys are working really hard. I can see that when I catch glimpses of you on the shows. I worry about you, baby. I worry that you're not getting enough rest. You've got to take care of yourself.

I'm going to do my best to tire you out until you fall over when I get back. Promise you that.

Well, I promise you more than a few things. Mostly me. I do promise you that I'm going to give you as much of me as you can take.

Miss you.

Want you.

Love you.

Your Shichi.

## Tarnished Angels

I miss you, Shichi.

I know we keep saying that to each other but it's true. We talk on the phone and when I hang up, I feel like I've torn off a piece of my heart and shoved it into the phone. Thankfully, I get a piece of yours in return so it fills the space I left there.

I'm writing this while sitting on your couch. Thanks for letting me use your silence. When you told me that I could come here for my quiet, I didn't know what to say other than thank you.

I'm going to try to say more than thank you here. But I can't. I mean how do I tell you how I feel about being surrounded by your quiet?

I can feel you here in this apartment. Even when you're not here, I can feel you here. I'm not going to stay longer than an hour or two. I think I just need to recharge my soul and then head home.

I think if I stay longer, I will want to crawl into your bed and wait until you come home.

That wouldn't be good for my group.

Guess that's the hardest thing that we do, isn't it? We don't have any control over how we live our lives. Everything is arranged around us and we have to find small bits of time to live in. I'm grateful that you're here with me during my scraps of time and space. Even more grateful that your love is with me.

The hyungs appear to be either getting sick or getting over being sick. I worry sometimes about Jæjoong and Yoochun. They seem to get sicker than the rest of us. Yunho is stoic and sometimes we don't even know he's sick until he's nearly collapsed. He takes being our leader very seriously. I'm glad I don't have that responsibility. And I also feel guilty because I can't lift that from his shoulders.

My mom is like that. Well she was. She used to carry everything. In some ways I'm glad I'm with the hyungs because I am one less thing that she has to worry about. She can concentrate on my family. I do miss her.



## Tarnished Angels

She's always good to sit down with on the couch and just talk about nothing.

I think I like just sitting on couches and talking about nothing. Aish, I'm lazy!

It's sunny here right now. Well it was. Now it's almost night time. I like sitting at this window. I wish we had more windows in our apartment but all we would see is the street. I kind of like being this high up and looking out onto the city.

It's like there are a sea of square stars outside of my window. It's like being suspended in the night sky.

I'm trying very hard to stay in the living room. What I really want to do is get undressed, find some of your clothes and sleep in your bed. Okay, I should confess something.

I am wearing one of your t-shirts. And boxers. Well, my boxers. But your t-shirt. Why am I wearing only your shirt and my boxers? Well, I wanted to be comfortable and my jeans just seemed heavy and constricting while I sat on the couch.

It also makes me feel like we've just shared one another and you've gone out for something and I'm waiting for you to come back.

The story I owe you? It's a picture of me, writing and drinking tea.

There's a young man sitting on a soft, oversized couch. He's wearing only a pair of black boxer briefs and a white shirt that is too big for him. In my mind, he's calm on the outside but if you look closely, you can see him glancing at the door because he's waiting for someone to come through the door.

His lover has gone out to bring a late dinner back for them. He chews on the ends of his pen, writing a few words in a journal and debating reading a few pages of his book.

He misses his lover and is a little hungry but he's not sure if it's for food or for the older man that has worked under his skin.

## Tarnished Angels

I would imagine he's longing for the guy more than the food.

I know I am. When I think of what taste I should have in my mouth, it's you I have there.

I've started drinking chai tea because it reminds me of your kisses. I've missed your kisses so much.

I never thought I would feel like there was a part of me elsewhere. Please take care of my heart. I think you packed it in with your socks. Or maybe I dropped it in there when I packed up your soap and stuff for you.

Did you know I kissed your soap? I wanted to have you wash your body and work my kiss into your skin.

Now who's the stalker?

I have to stop now. Because missing you has made me cry.

I'm going to crawl into your bed. I am going to wrap my body in your sheets and hold your pillow against my stomach. Your sheets are going to be your arms and the pillow will be your body.

I love you. I love your friendship. You make me feel safe and warm. You also make me feel like I can take chances because you'll be there to catch me if I fall. I can be more daring because you love me.

You've given me the chance to fly and dream more.

I love you so much.

Kisses,

Changmin, your Minku.

## Tarnished Angels

Baby,

God. I don't have words for how hard it was to get that shirt you wore in the mail. I don't even have a word for how hard I got when I found the pictures you took of yourself on the couch.

Hell, my mouth is still dry.

God, I'm still hard. I don't think that's ever going to go away now.

You are making it very difficult for me to concentrate at work. The image of you is burned into my mind, into my soul. Every time I close my eyes, I see that sweet-wicked mouth of yours.

I'm going to talk about something else or I'm never going to be able get something done today.

The company is having something at one of the clubs tonight. I have to go and do the meet and greet thing with people. You know, shake hands and smile. Make some conversation. Nod at someone's bad jokes. Not as bad as Junsu's jokes. I heard some of those gags he's made. Those are horrible.

Of course you know that. But they're funny in that he enjoys them. You can hear the joy in his laugh. You're much funnier than Junsu. It's just that no one else sees that part of you. It's not something you share, that dry, droll humour of yours.

Don't get jealous. I know you, Minku. There's always a bit of competition in you. Don't deny it.

It's something I like about you. I like seeing that fire in your eyes and when that gorgeous mouth of yours gets a little hard when you're determined about something. I've watched you and there's nothing more sexy than your face when you're focused on something.

Shit, wasn't I not going to talk about how sexy you are?

I don't think anyone can talk about you without talking about how fucking sexy you are.

By the way, whoever decided to put that black collar on you, the one with the chains, seriously needs to be applauded. I have a picture of you in that. All I can think about is how damned hot you'd look wearing just that collar and nothing else. Lying on my bed, your knees up and that luscious mouth of yours parted so I can see the tip of your tongue when you run it across your teeth.

## Tarnished Angels

Baby, your mouth was made for sin. Hell, that body of yours is proof that the devil means to bring me down to my knees. And I'm glad to be there because there are all sorts of very nice things I can do to you when I'm down on my knees.

I want to live in your mouth. I want to live in your body. Hell, I want your body to live in mine.

I love you. I lust after you. Tonight I'm going to be staring at a club full of people and thinking of the absolutely gorgeous guy that I have in my heart and my bed and wanting to be there beside him.

Since I can't have you by me, I'll wear the shirt you borrowed tonight. And when I call you, I'll tell you how your scent smells on me.

I have dreams about you. Probably sick and twisted dreams but there are times when I wake up shaking because it seems so real. You're sometimes just laying next to me, asleep and letting me run my hands over your long legs and over your stomach. Or you're on your belly and I get to kiss your back and shoulders. I love your back. And your stomach. Hell, I love every inch of your body.

Of course now I'm thinking I do need to love every inch of your body and maybe with that collar on, I could attach you to the headboard with a small chain and take as long as I want with you.

Told you, you make me want to taste every bit of sin that is out there. Hell, you give me fantasies that surprise even my jaded brain.

But the best one I've had so far is sitting on a beach with you and watching the sunset while we kiss. Naked. On the sand and salty from swimming in the ocean.

I can imagine making love to you in the waves. Just holding you and letting the tide move our bodies in and out of one another. Letting the sea guide us to climax.

Then letting the sun bake our scents into one another.

Well, okay the collar one still has me fixated but I can definitely do the beach one.

Hell, I'd like enough time to do them all. As long as I'm doing them with you.

And yet, I go back to talking about how sexy you are and how much I want you. You've gotten under my skin, Minku.

## Tarnished Angels

I worry that being away from you for so long will make my memory in your mind fade. You want to talk about jealous? I think about all of the people who touch you every day and I go crazy. Don't let someone's touch burn into your skin. Let me be the only one who touches you like that.

I never want your eyes to forget me. I want your mouth to always remember mine. More importantly, I want your body to know my hands when I touch you.

And, I can't wait until I see your new haircut. I like what they're doing with it. Looks like there's more for me to hold onto when I kiss you.

I have to end this. We've got to head to that silly party and I'm going to spend my time pretending that I'm interested in listening to people who don't have stories about strangers in their hearts.

Fuck, I miss you.

I just miss having you near me. My soul is cold without you. My bed weeps for your body. And I just wish you were here.

Love you.

Your Shichi.

## Tarnished Angels

Se7en opened the door to his apartment, his heart heavy and his limbs reluctant to move. The emptiness of the space loomed in front of him. After Changmin's return to Japan, he now dreaded coming home to his home, afraid to listen to the echoes of the walls.

He knew he would listen for the tumbling words of his lover, Min's husky, sexy murmur a sweet undertone to the sounds of the city outside. Brushing at the tear that threatened his lashes, Se7en pushed down at the emotions rising to choke him.

With each step into the living room, his heart ached more. Every bit of furniture now held a memory, however slight, of the stubborn, willful, intelligent, sexy young man he'd fallen for. His dearest friend. Someone to share even the most secret of fears.

Even in his pain, Se7en was thankful for Min's love. He wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

"We are what we are, Minku." Se7en shed his shirt, letting it fall onto the couch and walked over to the corner window. Seoul continued along with her life, busy and ignorant of the lives she held in her belly. He stared at the streets below. He'd not trusted himself to go out onto the balcony but after nearly two weeks, he wanted to sit in the papa-san chair and hope to find Min's scent on its fabric.

Before it had been one of his favourite places to sit and enjoy the world. Se7en didn't know if he would be able to go out there without Changmin curled up against him.

Retrieving a beer from the fridge, Se7en opened the sliding glass door and padded outside, letting the night pour down over his half-naked body. The darkness felt good, a wash of black that covered the tears he knew were lurking beneath his control.

He refused to cry without having Min around to kiss them from his eyes. He would hold his tears until his lover was next to him. And then, only then, would he share his pain.

Turning, Se7en took a sip of his beer and then caught sight of the square envelope sitting on the papa-san chair, his name boldly written on the front. His heart jerked at the familiar scrawl, a strong pen worked with deliberate care.

Picking up the letter, Se7en crawled into the curved cushion, setting his beer down on the table. Slitting open the tab, he shook out the folded pages inside, thankful that the awning would have kept the letter from the sun or rain. He couldn't help but smile when he saw Min's opening lines, the warmth of their loving spreading deep inside of him.

## Tarnished Angels

Dear Shichi,

I don't know when you're going to find this. I hope it's soon after I leave but I know that you are going to spend the day working and then when you come home, you'll probably be so tired. But I'm hoping that you head out to the balcony and find this.

When am I writing this? We've just made love. Well, I've made love to you for the first time and you've fallen asleep after we've talked. I wanted to write something for you to find, like you did for me that first time.

Because I think you need to know how you make me feel.

We talk a lot about how we miss each other and how we love one another. About how we're friends. And that we're never going to let one another go.

I wanted to say that these are just words. Because what I feel can't even touch what ever I say to you. I wish there were colours that I could give you so you could know how I feel. I could tell you about the rose—pink that you pull out of me when you kiss me. Or the deep black of your arms around me, because in the dark, you and I are always one. Whenever you hug me, I feel that. It's like we're always making love. Every time you touch me, we're making love.

Okay, that probably doesn't make sense. But it's true. When we touch, our souls mingle. And we're bound together. There is no one on top or bottom. We just are mingled. Tangled into each other. Because you make love to my soul as much as you make love to my body.

I'm going to leave the day after tomorrow. And before I go, I'm going to sneak this outside for you to find.

How do I write a letter that explains to you how I feel? This is hard to do. Because everything seems so pale compared to what you do to me.

I'm watching you sleep. Like you watch me sometimes. I find I watch you breathe and I want touch your mouth with mine. I want to let your

## Tarnished Angels

breath fill my mouth so I can keep it with me. I wish I could keep everything about you with me.

You wake up every once in a while and touch me. Not fully awake but I see you stir and you reach for me. I want to always be here when you reach for me. I wish I could always be here. I do.

I think of you as my Shichimi, the seven delicious flavours that add spice to my world. I've told you that. But what I've not told you is that sometimes, you are also my shichiyuu, the seven heavenly bodies that surround me. They were the celestial objects that could be seen from ancient times and then as man grew wiser and could see farther, more became apparent.

That is really how I see you.

When I first met you, I thought; Ah, he's so full of himself.

Little did I know that I wanted me to be full of you.

You unfolded before me. And you unfolded me under you.

As I got to know you, I saw more of what the universe of Seven held. And I can't believe how vast and beautiful it is. You take my breath away, Shichi.

Every step we took together has been one of learning for me. I've spent the past few years of my life thinking that I was someone who should be in the background. You have shown me how to step forward. And that I am worthy to step forward.

I can't say that I'll be bold. It's not in my nature to be bold. But you've shown me how to be more daring. And while I might still blush, I know that you'll be there to kiss the red away. I shall always be grateful for my shyness because it makes you kiss me.

I really like your kisses. They are the most precious things I have ever been given. I wish I could collect them and store them in a box to run my fingers through. They are like stars. Like rainbows.



## Tarnished Angels

Did you know that shichishoku means the seven prismatic colours? I found that out and thought; that is what Dong-wook does for me. You show me that what I thought was light is really the beauty of colours hidden inside of the white. Now when ever I wear white, I shall think that you are around me. I hope to be the prism for the white and hold your colours inside of me.

By the way, I've stolen a few of your white shirts. I might or might not return them to you.

I will however take pictures of myself on your bed. Because I know you want me too. I can't say that I won't be embarrassed. I know I will be. And if you ever share them, I will kill you. And tell everyone that you're very short down there.

And then I will make it true.

Can you tell that I've had so little sleep? I really don't want to sleep. I don't want to miss a second of watching you. I really don't.

Ah, you're starting to stir again. I should put this away and use my fingers and mouth for other things.

You've shown me the world and inside of you. I love you. I am in love with you. You are my friend and my sweetness. You make me feel like I am special and that no one else in the world can make you feel loved enough to fall asleep against.

After your making love to me, your sleeping next to me is probably the most erotic thing that you've given me. And the dearest.

You are definitely awake. Or at least almost awake. I like how you wake up slowly. You're worse than I am. Ah, your hand is looking for me and has found my thigh. Your eyes aren't open yet but they will be.

When you find this letter, remember my kisses. Remember my eyes and remember me telling you that I love you. I will tell you that I love you. And I will scream your name and beg you for more.

Because I can't get enough of you, my Shichi.

## Tarnished Angels

Don't ever let go of me. Don't ever let go of my heart.

I love you, Shichi.

I love you, Dong-Wook.

I cherish you.

Your Minku.

## Tarnished Angels

Se7en pressed the letter to his mouth, turning his head and blinked away the tears in his eyes. The chirrup of his phone made him smile. His lover was calling early.

Wiping at his face with the back of his hand, he heard his phone cut off in mid-ring. Wondering if Changmin hung up without leaving a message, he hurried into the living room.

Grabbing at the phone, he flipped it open and answered, hoping he'd caught Min before the young man disconnected. Swearing at the empty line, Se7en swore hard, twisting about and reminding himself that flinging the phone across the room would do no good.

Min stood in the middle of his living room, lean and sensual, dressed only in a pair of black boxer briefs and a familiar white shirt he'd lost to his lover a few weeks ago. Quirking an eyebrow, Changmin held up his own phone, a finger on the end call button. Leaned against the door frame, he was a sexy drape of muscle and sweetness. With a tender smile, Min looked at Se7en, an invitation clearly written on his face as he spoke.

“Hi, baby. Want to help me make kitten noises?”

# Tarnished Angels