

# Blurled Confessions

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A Slice of Life Short by Heimdall

The first time she met her roommate, she thought to herself, 'Shit,' and then, 'A kid genius?' (Incidentally, said "kid genius" roommate first thought, 'Wow,' and an afterthought, 'Is she older than me?')

She stood stock-still in the middle of their shared (meagre) kitchenette/living room, one hand loosely clutching the handle of her (extra-large) metallic pink suitcase, the other skilfully holding onto a fruit smoothie and a (hot pink) cellphone wedged between her fingers. A pair of sunglasses sat fashionably perched on the top of her head as she stared blankly at the other girl. At that moment she wished her sunglasses covered her eyes (or just anything to cover her face).

"Uh... Bweeh."

She mentally kicked herself for being so verbally eloquent. She released her grip on the suitcase handle and politely bowed before sticking out her free hand to the other girl as she lightly cleared her throat. "Hello, you're my roommate, right? It's nice to meet you. I'm Tiffany Hwang. I'll be in your care for the next year."

The petite girl opposite her stood casually with a simple blue apron tied around her waist as she absentmindedly wiped her wet hands on a dishtowel. Her slim, black horn-rimmed glasses glinted under bright sunlight shining through the window. She (minutely) quirked an eyebrow at the peculiar name and stared at Tiffany's outreached hand for a

moment. She gave a small smile and bowed back to her before holding her hand in a cool (slightly wet) handshake.

"Hello, I'm Kim Taeyeon. It's nice to meet you too. Please take care of me as well."

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It takes the girls three days of rooming together to realize that they're actually the same age. It started with a(n awkward) polite talk between the two:

"So... Uhh... What's your major, Taeyeon-ssi?" A sip of tea.

"Eh? Oh, I'm doing double. Public relations and journalism. What about you, Tiffany-ssi?" A nudge upwards on the bridge of her slipping glasses.

A hum of understanding, "First year business." Another nervous sip. "Um, not to sound rude or anything, but you look so young. How old are you?"

An easy grin, "Thank you, I'm a '89-er. A spring baby."

It takes a split second for Tiffany to realize before she blurts out, "Omo! You're the same age as me! You're not a kid genius!" and Taeyeon good-naturedly laughs out loud at the absurdity. "No, I'm not," She giggles as she wipes the corner of her eye with a fingertip.

Tiffany laughs along with her, "But really, I can't believe you're actually older than me, Taeyeon-ssi." Their giggling dies down after a few minutes and Taeyeon blurts out her own confession, "To tell the truth, I thought *you* were older than *me*." They stared at each other for a moment and laughed again.

The weird, formal atmosphere from the past three days disappeared and left an easy-going mood in its place.

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The day after, they dropped the formalities with each other.

“You know, it’s OK to drop the -ssi with my name, Tiffany-ssi.”

“Only if you don’t do it with mine then, Taeyeon.”

“OK.”

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Being different majors, the two don’t have much to relate to in terms of academia (“I’m all number-y and you’re all word-y, Taeyeon-ah.”), but surprisingly, it’s their circle of friends that do.

Soonkyu (the girl adamantly refuses her ‘granny’ name, and tells people to call her Sunny) - Taeyeon’s childhood friend, met Tiffany during their business management class and quickly became friends over silently imitating (actually, they were mocking) the lecturer. Their ‘imitating’ later evolved to silly note passing spanning from ridiculous drawings to semi-serious conversations scratched on paper. A couple weeks after a particularly gruesome assignment, they became bar buddies, leaving Taeyeon (and later, Jessica, to her annoyance) to be that person that picks up their drunken friends in the middle of the night.

Taeyeon, on the other hand, met (more like bumped) Jessica - Tiffany’s best friend from middle and high school, at a local coffee shop on campus. She knocked over the latter’s coffee macchiato by accident and began bowing profusely while mumbling “I’m so sorry!” repeatedly to the girl. Jessica gave a small sigh and politely (repeatedly) told her “It’s OK. Really, it’s OK. Don’t worry about it. It didn’t spill on anything but the table. It’s OK.”

When Taeyeon shakily handed Jessica her replacement cup of coffee with two hands, Jessica couldn’t help but giggle. “You’re not gonna spill this one on me are you?” she teased. Taeyeon gaped at her with her mouth slightly open before stammering, “N-n-no! Of course not!” Jessica grinned as she graciously accepted the hot beverage from Taeyeon’s trembling hands. “I’m sorry for teasing you. How about we start over? I’m

Jessica, and you?” She stuck out her free hand towards Taeyeon. Taeyeon felt a déjà vu coming on as she smiled at the other girl and reciprocated with a firm handshake, “I’m Taeyeon.”

Over the next couple months, their little circle of friends expanded from helpful sunbaes that lent out notes and old test material freely (“Oh Siwon-oppa, you’re a lifesaver! I swear didn’t know how I’d pass without your notes!” “It’s no problem, Tiffany. Just pay me back with a coffee. See you at church?”), students in different departments (“No, seriously, Hyoyeon. It’s a really good interior design concept! You should do it. Do it! Do it!”), to the quirky manager/barista at the local bakery-café (“Heechul-oppa! Can I get my usual, please?” “Yah! That’s not how you address me, Taeyeon-ah. What do you say?” “Ugh, you’re so full of yourself, oppa.” A loud sigh. “Big star Heechul-oppa, can I get my usual, please?”).

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Taeyeon takes it upon herself to cook the meals (just mostly dinner, really) when she realizes that the stove needs a restraining order on Tiffany. The younger girl sheepishly bows her head and stared at everything else but her roommate, when Taeyeon cocks an eyebrow at the completely charred remnants of what seems to be a huge batch of eggs enough to feed nine people. They come to a compromise with Taeyeon cooking and Tiffany prepping the food for (self-proclaimed) chef Taeyeon.

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Tiffany cheats the restraining order once to make French toast one morning (“It’s cravings, OK?” she says). Taeyeon licks her lips after eating and makes an exception in the restraining order.

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Sunny makes it a habit to barge into their dorm room randomly (she knocks *once* as a courtesy) after Tiffany told her that Taeyeon made dinner once during class.

“Do you know how *rare* it is for her to cook? If she wasn’t so dead set on being a journalist, I swear she could have made it as a top chef or something.” Sunny mumbled around a piece of pork cutlet. She let out a moan, “My god... this is so good.” Tiffany smiles in agreement.

During the later months, their tiny dorm becomes the place where their close friends decide to bum food off of. Both Taeyeon and Tiffany thinks of them as annoyances when they stomp in after classes, school bags dumped onto the floor as they retreat to the kitchenette and scrounge for food (like a pack of starving hyenas).

Tiffany doesn’t really mind all that much, since it’ll mean that Hyoyeon and Yuri would be there to help Taeyeon out with cooking. Jessica, Sunny and herself would be off on the sidelines whining for food (they mostly steal while waiting). In her point of view, it’s a win-win situation for her.

But all in all, deep inside, both girls are glad that their friends are there – their extra company is never unwanted anyways (they get to order the other girls to get groceries and do odd jobs). Besides, ice cream tastes better when shared (though on some days, Taeyeon would beg to differ: “Who ate my Chunky Mint Chocolate ice cream?” Jessica and Hyoyeon exchange wide-eyed, shifty glances at each other, both bringing a finger up to their lips.).

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Aside from their social butterfly ways (Taeyeon being a bit more discreet), they found out they were both music geeks when Taeyeon nearly tripped over a CD jewel case on the floor:

Taeyeon let out a yelp as she stubbed her toe on the corner of the plastic case - it skidded across the floor from the impact. Tiffany, who was dozing off on the couch with earphones plugged in her ears startled awake. “**Oh my god**, Taeyeon! Are you alright?” She hastily yanks out her earphones, shoves everything off her and rolls off the couch in a heap.

Taeyeon gingerly hopped around on a foot for a moment, “I’m fine, Tiffany, I’m fine.” She then drops down onto the floor, pulling her smarting toe towards her. She wiggles all her toes before glancing at Tiffany, “See, I’m fine!” she gives out a wide smile to the younger girl. Tiffany grins back in return, taking a seat on the floor and leaned back onto the couch, feeling relieved that she didn’t seriously injure her roommate. (It wouldn’t sound good if she’s going to be known as “The Roommate Abuser” or something equally dramatic like that.)

Being too lazy to lean forward and stretch an arm to grab the (evil) jewel case, Taeyeon compromises by slapping down a foot on it and dragging it towards her. She purses her lips as she reads the title, “...**Ta...***mia*?” Tiffany chuckles at her roommate’s childish antics, “Yeah, **Tamia**. She’s an amazing singer, you know? Here, listen.” She grabs the discarded earphones from the couch and holds them up towards Taeyeon, “It’s in English, but you don’t need to know the words to enjoy music.”

Taeyeon grins and pops in the offered earbuds as the younger girl fiddles around on her CD player. She takes a seat beside Tiffany and fishes out her iPod from inside her hoodie pouch and holds it out in front of the girl, “We’ll trade; I got a bit of R&B, hip hop and a mix of jazz and indie in there.” Tiffany gives her a smirk and exchanges their players.

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Taeyeon’s never one to pry, (she’s too polite, respects people’s privacy and has enough common sense not to be pushy and annoying) even though she’s really, *really* curious (her inner journalist is trying to claw its way out, screaming, ‘It’s a scoop!’) why her roommate’s name is Tiffany. Of course, she knows a name is a name, and the other girl is from abroad (her father transferred to Seoul when she was twelve, bringing the whole family over), but what really nags her is what her roommate’s *Korean* name is.

She’s tried asking Jessica (and offhandedly asked what her Korean name is too – Jessica wrinkles her nose and keeps mum) but all she’s given is a face that’s trying not to laugh, and the conversation directs itself to another topic. Apparently, Soonky- no,

*Sunny* knows it, but she's keeping her lips tightly sealed because it seems the two struck up some sort of (ridiculous) pact one night over drinks.

It isn't until Christmas when Tiffany blurts it out, one part slurred words and all parts drunk.

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When winter break comes around, both girls are mentally exhausted from exams and last minute assignments. However, the feeling of giddiness from no school, and the wonderfulness that is two weeks of freedom (a.k.a. doing absolutely nothing), leaves one of the two with nervous, excited energy.

Taeyeon sits at the end of couch, jiggling her knees up and down as if she's on a caffeine high. She mentally ticked off what she needs to bring back home with her as she devours her bag of gummy worms. Surprisingly, Tiffany is more demure; sitting comfortably sprawled on the couch, head lolled back on the armrest, lazily wagging her feet side to side - so much unlike her usual bouncy, energetic self.

Finishing her mental checklist, Taeyeon leans back to rest on the couch (knees still jumping) and turns her head to face Tiffany, "So, you going back home for break, Tiffany?" The girl raises her head up to stare at the older girl. Covering her mouth as she lets out a yawn, she slowly shakes her head. "Daddy's off working somewhere and my brother and sister are spending it with their girlfriend and boyfriend. I'm just gonna stay here."

Taeyeon's eyes widen after hearing her plans, "What? No. You're not gonna spend it alone here. It's depressing, not to mention dangerous." She pulls her legs up onto the couch and tucks them underneath her, her whole body facing the younger girl, "Come with me." Now it's Tiffany's turn to widen her eyes, "Eh? W-what?" She sits up straight and crosses her legs.

“You heard me, come with me,” repeats Taeyeon in that no nonsense tone of hers as she leans forward towards Tiffany. “W-what? Oh, I-I couldn’t do that! I c-can’t impose on you and y-your family like that.” stammers Tiffany, completely taken aback by Taeyeon.

“You’re not imposing, and I’m inviting you, my friend, to spend Christmas with me- my family.” (Taeyeon mentally winces at herself when she stumbles over the last bit.)

“B-but..!”

“No buts. Just pack your stuff and come with me. It’s like I’m Ron Weasley and you’re Harry Potter. You’re coming with me to the Burrow.”

Tiffany stares blankly at her for a moment and snorts out a laugh before clapping madly in silent laughter. She shakily nods a yes to Taeyeon’s request.

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The girls leave their tiny dorm in the afternoon the following day, one walking briskly with a duffel bag while the other drags a large suitcase behind her as they made their way to the Seoul KTX train station. On the train, Taeyeon chatters animatedly during the ride to Jeonju, hyping up Tiffany on what would be this personalized tour created just for her. Tiffany can’t wait.

When they step off the platform, Tiffany suddenly realizes that she’s meeting her roommate’s parents for the first time, and starts fretting (seriously freaking out, “**Oh my god, oh my god.**”) over what to do (she almost hyperventilates at one point, “Wha-what fruits do they like, Taeyeon-ah?!”). She immediately drags Taeyeon over to a supermarket to buy fruits (“Ajumeoni, how much for oranges?”) after taking a taxi to Taeyeon’s neighbourhood.

Taeyeon, being completely at ease, greets hello to the neighbourhood aunties doing their afternoon shopping, and buys a couple packets of gummy worms and a bottle of tea before stuffing it into her duffel bag. She walks in step with Tiffany out the store and quickly seizes Tiffany’s just bought bag of oranges from her grip in one hand, and tugs



on girl's free hand in the other before walking home. "It's hard enough for you to drag a suitcase and carry a bag of oranges," she replies to Tiffany's surprised look.

They're inside the spacious lobby of a tall apartment complex when Taeyeon tells Tiffany, "You don't have to be so nervous, you know. My parents and sister are fine with it. It's not like they're going to eat you or something." She lifts up the bag of oranges, "That's what the oranges are for." She flashes a toothy grin at Tiffany and jabs a finger at the elevator button. Tiffany cracks a smile at Taeyeon's joke and calms down for a moment before getting fidgety again as they wait (not so patiently) for the elevator. Taeyeon glances at the nervous girl and grasps her hand, squeezing it gently before letting go, "Think of it as a school trip or something. Ooh! Or a really awesome sleepover that lasts for a week!"

Tiffany gives a small smile at the older girl's (silly) attempts to ease her and slowly feels the tension leave her body. "Thanks, Taeyeon-ah." Taeyeon widens her grin and hands back her bag of oranges. "Just be you, Tiffany."

The one who greets the two wasn't either of Taeyeon's parents, but her little sister. Taeyeon stifles a grin at her younger sibling before loudly blurting out, "Yah! Who're you?! Who's this huge kid?" Her little sister, Hayeon, lets out a delighted giggle before launching herself at her older sister, "Unnie, you're home!" Taeyeon returns the big hug with a large bear hug of her own. The little girl quiets her laughs as she takes a peek around her sister and stares up at Tiffany.

"H-hello. It-It's nice to meet you. I'm Tiffany," Tiffany stammers, giving a jerky, ninety-degree bow to the younger girl. "H-here! I brought oranges for your family." Hayeon cocks her head curiously before returning the bow. "Hello, Tippy unnie! I'm Hayeon." She gives a wide grin before accepting the bag, "Oooh, I love oranges, unnie!" she backpaddles a bit and leans back on the front door to open it wider, "Come in!"

"See? Nothing to be nervous about." Taeyeon grins at Tiffany and takes a step inside.

A couple hours later, Taeyeon's parents come home and welcome Tiffany with wide smiles (and awkward 90° bows and nervous handshakes from Tiffany). They both

thanked her for the oranges and compliments on how polite she is (and teases at how utterly unladylike their Taeyeon is, when they see their eldest daughter stuffing her face with yogurt with Hayeon).

During the next several days, the Kim family practically takes Tiffany in as their third daughter. Hayeon thinks of her as the coolest unnie ever (and cutely pesters Tiffany to help her with her English and math homework), while both parents teases Taeyeon on why she can't be more like girly like her roommate and do more aegyo. (Taeyeon scrunches up a face and attempts to do something cutesy only for it to backfire and look painfully awkward.)

On Christmas Day, the Kim family's eldest child, Jiwoong, comes back on vacation leave from the army to surprise them all. He warmly welcomes Tiffany and tells her of all the embarrassing things Taeyeon did as a kid over dinner ("Did you know that Taetae here used to eat dirt 'cause she thought it was chocolate? Yeah, not kidding, *handfuls* of it."). Taeyeon sits still in her seat like a statue with a look of pure horror ("Oppa! Stop it! No!"), and Tiffany listens on, clapping wildly in laughter.

Later at night, the three of them walk out to a nearby bar for have a little drink. Taeyeon adamantly refuses letting her brother pay, telling him it's been too long since they last saw each other and tells him to order whatever he wants. Jiwoong chuckles and ruffles her hair and lets her have her way. The three talk about school, friends, the army and whatever else they could think of as they leisurely take sips of soju (Taeyeon wrinkles her nose and nurses her glass of water).

It later ended up talking about Tiffany's childhood between hiccups and ordering a new bottle of soju (to their current collection of three and one tiny, finished bowl of makgeolli).

"So you're from America, Tiffany?" Jiwoong tops off her shot glass with soju.

"Yuuuup, born and raised Californian, Tiffany Hwang Miyoung!" Tiffany slurs a bit proudly and knocks back the shot.

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The next afternoon (morning *long* past), Jiwoong and Tiffany are both mumbling bloody murder as they hide their eyes and try to slink their way to the kitchen table. Taeyeon looks on and snickers, “Morning oppa, *Miyoung*.” Jiwoong gives out a grunt before wincing in pain while Tiffany growls and flashes a blurry eyed glare at Taeyeon. Taeyeon smirks before taking pity on their hunched forms. She slid over two glasses of water and dropped an aspirin each in front of them. The hungover duo gave another grunt (in thanks this time) and both press their thumbs into their temples as if trying to rub the pain out of their heads.

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When it was time for the two girls to leave, it was a tearful (read: extremely melodramatic) ordeal. Hayeon grabbed tight onto Taeyeon as the older girl tried to leave the apartment (“Don’t leave, unnie! Stay longer!”). Mrs. Kim kept tearing up over Tiffany, mumbling promises (“Come back during the holidays alright, young lady? Call us whenever!”) and presses a hefty bag of food into her hands after a long hug (“There should be enough for you two for a while. And eat more, you’re so scrawny.”) The two men just stood to a side at the back and just waved, “Call us when you get there.”

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Taeyeon calls Tiffany, ‘Miyoung’, the second time when she’s trying to get her attention. (Coincidentally, Tiffany starts calling her ‘Taetae’ for the first time in annoyed retaliation.) Tiffany sat on the floor; her usual spot, back leaning against the couch as she types away on her laptop. Her ears are plugged with her earphones, music leaking it’s melody out as she pauses in her typing to take a sip of tea, eyes never leaving the screen.

Taeyeon stands at the kitchen counter calling out “Tiffany” but it falls on deaf (plugged) ears. She grunts in annoyance as she makes her way towards the seated girl. She chews on her bottom lip for a moment before squatting and waving a hand over the laptop screen, “Miyoung.” Tiffany jerks back in surprise at the waving hand and yanks off the earphones, “W-what?”

“You were ignoring me, so now I’m gonna call you ‘Miyoung’ whenever you do.”

“I-I wasn’t ignoring you! I just didn’t hear you, Taeyeon-ah. And don’t call me Miyoung.”

“That’s ‘cause you play your music way too loud, Miyoung-ah. Also, dinner’s ready. And, no.”

“Stop calling me Miyoung, Taeyeon-ah! Or else I’ll call you Taetae.”

Taeyeon smirks, “Go ahead, Miyoungie.” she teases.

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They both get used to calling each other those names after two weeks of relentless teasing and stubbornness.

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It was surprising when they had their first fight as roommates. It wasn’t over anything particularly serious (Taeyeon tripped over one of Tiffany’s discarded shirts on the floor) but somehow it escalated to an argument, with Taeyeon talking in that quiet, measured tone of hers and Tiffany’s voice getting louder and louder by the second. It ends with Taeyeon angrily storming out of the dorm (after grabbing her jacket, wallet and keys) and Tiffany taking in heaving gulps of air in the aftermath of their argument.

They managed to avoid each other for the next three days after the fight before they have an awkward meeting on the fourth. Taeyeon had spent the three days rooming with Sunny (and her roommate, Yuri), (barely) sleeping on their couch. During the night after the fight, she walked over to their dorm and pounded on the door (completely forgetting about the doorbell) until Sunny pulled open the door about to scream obscenities.

When she saw Taeyeon, she quietly pulled her inside and sat her down on her bed. Sunny listened with a sympathetic ear as Taeyeon blurted everything out. She gave her a tight hug and told her she was kind of being a douche for taking her anger out on her

roommate and she needed to apologize to Tiffany ASAP. Taeyeon squirmed around Sunny's hold, feeling uncomfortable (ashamed), until she finally agreed, "I'll apologize when I see her." Taeyeon made trips back to her dorm when she knew Tiffany wasn't there. She picked up her various textbooks, notes, took a quick shower or made a simple sandwich to eat.

Likewise, Tiffany did the same, only staying at the dorm for sleep (restless tossing around) as if she couldn't bear to stay there longer than needed. She avoided Sunny because she knew the other girl would ask (Sunny really was too good for her).

On the day they had their fight, after Taeyeon stomped her way out, she sulked on the couch with her legs pulled up to her chest. She was seething inside until her eyes dropped down onto the shirt laying innocently on the floor. She scowled at the offending article of clothing before she stalked over and picked it up, staring at it for a moment until in a fit of anger, balled it up and flung it into her hamper.

Feeling the need to vent, she picked up her cellphone and dialled Jessica's number. "Someone better be dying or else I'm hanging up." greets Tiffany when the call is answered. She feels relief (familiarity) when she hears her friend's voice, all quiet and melodic with her blunt words. "Hey, Jess." is how she starts before she blurts out what just took place a half hour ago.

Jessica hums and makes little nonsensical noises as she listens to Tiffany vent, one hand holding her phone to her ear, the other idly flipping the pages of a textbook. When Tiffany finishes, Jessica takes a moment of silence to think. She frowns and clucks her tongue, "I'm coming over. See you in thirty." and promptly hangs up the phone.

Tiffany is really glad that Jessica was one of those people who prefer face-to-face (heart-to-heart) talks rather than phone calls. ("Well, I can't give you a hug or pig out and cry over ice cream with you over the phone now, can I?") She's all calmed down by the time the doorbell rings twenty minutes later. ('That was fast,' she thinks.) She opens the door only to have a paper bag thrust into her face. "I got you dinner too, Tiff." Tiffany scrunches her face and pushes the bag away, "Thanks, Jess." She then turns around and leads the way to her usual spot on the floor by the couch and plops down, waiting

for Jessica to follow suit. After pulling out the containers and drinks, the two girls eat in silence, Tiffany slurping her pasta with tomato sauce and meatballs, while Jessica calmly spoons her spicy seafood fried rice into her mouth.

“You know...” Jessica’s voice breaks the silence, “I don’t know *why* Taeyeon blew up on you, but you kind of *are* a health hazard. Well, to people, I guess.”

Tiffany sputters and chokes for a bit on her pasta. “What?”

“Remember that time when I stayed over once to finish that school project with you during high school? And I got this nasty bruise on my arm? Yeah. I told you it was nothing, but really, it was because I tripped over your stupid stack of magazines on the ground.” Jessica takes a bite of her cuttlefish and chews, “But seriously, both of you guys are at fault, you know. You should apologize to each other, Tiff.”

Tiffany lets out a defeated sigh, “I-I’ll do it when I see her.”

On the day they (accidentally) meet each other after actively avoiding the other for three days, Taeyeon was several steps away from the front door, carefully sliding a binder inside her messenger bag while chewing on a gummy worm, when Tiffany unlocks the front door and walks in. Both stand at their places stunned, feeling the stifling, awkward air between them.

“Tae-”

“Tif-”

“No, you-”

“No, y-”

Silence.

“I’m sorry.” Tiffany blinks at Taeyeon’s quiet voice.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. What I said." Taeyeon grits her teeth and runs her fingers through her hair in frustration. "It... It was just... I had a really shitty day. You know that big project I was going crazy over? Yeah... it was due that day and a group member completely forgot to do his part... When we told the professor, she told us that she won't accept it. She'll only grade what's given." She let out a deep breath. "Then I came home... and stuff happened... and I guess ended up taking my anger out on you." She gave a deep bow to Tiffany. "I'm so sorry, Miyoung-ah."

Tiffany takes a few steps forward and pulls Taeyeon into a tight hug. "No, I'm sorry too." she mumbles into her ear, feeling Taeyeon's arms slowly wrap around her. "It's a bad habit of mine to leave stuff around everywhere. My dad told me to fix it, but I always ignored him." she sniffled a bit, "Then Jessica reminded me, and called me a 'Human Health Hazard'," she lets out a weak chuckle. "If you take a look around, I picked up all my stuff, Taetae."

Taeyeon lightly laughs with her and holds her a bit tighter, "Yeah. I know, I saw."

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On Taeyeon's birthday, Tiffany rounds up their friends and drags the birthday girl to a club to celebrate. Getting Taeyeon to drink was difficult, but with Yuri, Hyoyeon and Tiffany present, it wasn't all that hard to switch out Taeyeon's usual (bland) water with something a little bit stronger ("Tastier," says Tiffany in her biased opinion). Jessica and Sunny sat amused in the corner of their little booth as they watched the spectacle unfold: Tiffany distracting Taeyeon while Yuri and Hyoyeon swap out her drinks as fast as possible.

Taeyeon woke up the next morning cotton mouthed with hammers whacking away inside her head. She licked her lips and found a thin film of (smudged) lip balm. It tasted like watermelons. (She likes mint.)

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She asks Tiffany about the lip balm when she doesn't feel like murdering the sun that's coyly winking at her through the kitchen blinds.

Tiffany snorts at her, "The lip balm?" Taeyeon nods at her and winces, "Yes."

The younger girl looked surprised, "You don't remember? You said you were *really* thirsty last night, and that your lips were chapped." Taeyeon narrows her eyes at her, "And who's fault was that?"

Tiffany giggles, "Sorry." (She wasn't.) She bit her lip. "Anyways, you said you needed lip balm really badly, so you kissed Yuri. On the lips."

Taeyeon gaped at her with wide eyes. Her continuous mumbled chanting of "no" muffled by her hands covering her (quickly reddening) face.

Tiffany nodded solemnly at her (and couldn't help but quirk her lips up in a teasing smirk).

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Taeyeon meekly rings the doorbell to Sunny and Yuri's shared dorm room. She prays that it wasn't Yuri who opens the door.

Yuri opens the door. ('Damn my luck,' she curses mentally.)

"Taeyeon-ah! What's up?" Yuri grins at her. (Taeyeon mentally curses at her lack of luck again and gets tongue tied.) "Yu-... Yuri-ah, I'm so sorry for what happened last night." She closes her eyes and places a hand over her forehead, slowly letting her fingers rake through her hair, "I just don't know what came over me. I am so, so sorry."

Yuri squints her eyes questionably at Taeyeon and tilts her head to the side, arms crossed across her chest, "But you didn't do anything, Taeyeon." Taeyeon snaps her eyes open to stare at the younger girl, "B-But, didn't I-"



“You got hammered and stole Hyoyeon’s lip balm and started smearing it all over your face. What did you think you did?”

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Taeyeon growls and makes a mental note to get her revenge on Tiffany as she darkly stalks her way back to her dorm room.

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When the school year is over, the two of them hand over their dorm keys and their rooming request slip for next year to the dorm mother. They both gave wide smiles to the older woman and a deep bow, “Thank you for everything, ma’am!”

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The two spent their summer with their families, occasionally calling the other up between work and just relaxing. When Tiffany’s birthday comes by, Taeyeon calls everyone up ahead of time and plans out how to get (her petty) sweet revenge on Tiffany.

Her plan for revenge backfired when she realized that her plans were crap and Tiffany’s alcohol tolerance was ridiculously high. Tiffany babbled and talked as if she were sober. She sighed and just decided to just sit back, enjoy and celebrate instead.

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It was just (weird, awkward) surreal when the two girls move back into their old dorm room again. It seemed almost (too scripted) cinematic when Tiffany dropped her suitcase and pulled Taeyeon into a bone-crushing hug when they meet again.

(Sunny pouted beside Taeyeon. “What about my hug, Miyoungie?” she cried in that cutesy aegyo voice of hers.)

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Taeyeon first meets Jiyong a month into the new school year. She's assigned to interview the university's new up and coming fresh art talent for the school newspaper. They both agreed to meet at the local café on campus and greeted each other awkwardly with a nervous handshake. He stood by the table awkwardly, a hand ruffling his bright blond hair.

He quickly drops his hand (he's feeling so shy) and as if he suddenly remembered his manners, gestures to Taeyeon to please take a seat before seating himself. Taeyeon spins her pen around absentmindedly as they both wait for their drinks – hot chocolate for him, hot lemon tea for her. Jiyong fiddles around with his watch (and his scarf, and the hem of his shirt, and his metal bracelet-) before he catches her amused eyes. She quirks a reassuring lopsided grin, "Shall we get started, Jiyong-ssi?" Taeyeon starts off the interview with the generic questions and Jiyong replies back with his generic answers.

Somewhere in the middle of the interview they fall in an awkward lapse in silence. Jiyong chuckles as he takes a gulp of his (cooled off) hot chocolate, "Aaah, this is so awkward," he mumbles. Taeyeon quirks a smile and let out a quiet chuckle, "It is." He glances at her with a smile of his own, ("Oh, he's got an eyesmile," Taeyeon mentally notes), his cheeks a little coloured, and they both feel a bit more relaxed.

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Taeyeon's relationship with Jiyong was simple, and she liked it like that. He was easy to talk to and he was fun. When they started to go out, he always took her to interesting places – the little hidden gems in Seoul. He also told great jokes and she liked his laugh, he always clapped when he laughed.

He was always a gentleman and walked her back to her dorm, giving her a quick, chaste peck on her forehead. He always sent a text to her right after he left the building telling her to "look outside" and she'll see him waving madly up at her.

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When Tiffany first saw Jiyong, she was tight-lipped as she stared at the man from across the street. He was smiling softly as he walked in step with Taeyeon beside him. Likewise, Taeyeon was happily babbling about whatever was interesting her at the moment (like jellyfish or something; the girl had odd interests).

Tiffany frowned.

Proper etiquette showed that friends should introduce other friends (or in this case, boyfriend) when they see each other. (Proper etiquette also tells her to never *ever* introduce boyfriends to parents, in this case, her father. And also by extent, her older brother.) Didn't Taeyeon see her? Why isn't she crossing the street with Jiyong in tow?

She took a deep breath and released it from her nose. Loudly.

Hyoyeon quirked an eyebrow, "What's with you?"

She scoffed and shifted her attention towards the younger girl.

"It's nothing."

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Taeyeon eventually introduces Jiyong to Tiffany (albeit reluctantly) when the younger girl opens the front door the same time Jiyong is about to bid Taeyeon goodbye (with his usual lopsided smile and a peck on her forehead).

('Well, this is awkward.' the three thought.)

All three stood by the doorway uncomfortably - two with a light blush dusting their cheeks while the remaining one just (blatantly) stared at them.

Tiffany takes notice of his bright hair ('Could it *be* any blonder?' she wonders), his ear piercings ('At least they're not tacky.'), the multitude of rings and bracelets adorned on

his fingers and wrists ('How does he move his hands?'), the twin tattoos imprinted on his inner forearms ('Hmm...') and his clothes ('What exploded on him?').

After a long moment of silence, Taeyeon awkwardly clears her throat.

"So... uh, Miy- Tiffany! This is Kwon Jiyong. Oppa, my roommate, Tiffany." She jerkily gestures with her hands in introduction.

"It's so nice to *finally* meet you, Jiyong-ssi." Tiffany flashes a (mild) glare at the shorter girl before slightly bowing. Jiyong (completely missing the tension) smiles and bows back, "It's nice to meet you too, Tippany-ssi."

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After meeting Jiyong a couple times more, she thinks he's actually kind of cool. He's got the whole artsy vibe and he's a great conversationalist (and great dresser, but she'll never admit it). Tiffany doesn't feel that weird, annoying nagging feeling anymore. Maybe it was because it sounds like Taeyeon talks of him as if he were a cool older sibling or something.

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The breakup was anything but dramatic. They met each other for lunch and in the middle of taking a bite of her sandwich, Jiyong told her quietly that it's probably best if they stopped seeing each other. Taeyeon slowly swallowed the rest of her sandwich and wiped her lips clean with a paper napkin. She knew it was inevitable, they kind of drifted apart after a while (Jiyong balancing his many art projects, Taeyeon with her double major studies, constant rescheduling of their dates). She decides to tease him before breaking off.

"Did you cheat on me? I saw the way you looked at--" she says quietly. ('Poker face. Poker face.' is repeatedly chanted through her mind.)

“Wh-what? N-no!” Jiyong cuts her off, (feeling panicked) “I never did and I never will! It’s just- I think-” Jiyong stammers.

Taeyeon laughs lightly into her hand and rests her head on his shoulder, “I know you didn’t, oppa. I’m just teasing you,” she murmurs. “If you weren’t going to break up with me, I was going to, actually.” She gives him a (bittersweet) smile as she pulls back from the position. “We’re better off as friends anyways.”

Jiyong grasps her hand and gives it a squeeze. He leans over and gives her a peck on the cheek.

“I’m sorry.”

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“Hey oppa, maybe if we’re forty and still didn’t find someone, let’s go get hitched.”

Jiyong’s eyes crinkle up into crescents and lightly laughs.

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While Taeyeon had her one steady relationship with Jiyong, Tiffany had gone on several one-time dates throughout the school year. The guys are plenty nice enough; some of them a bit cocky, others a little shy, but unfortunately, she felt that none of these ‘relationships’ would ever last long. She doesn’t feel that particular ‘*spark*’ with any of them. So she figures that she’ll just keep looking (all while getting a nice meal out of it.)

The closest to feeling a ‘spark’ she supposes, was her relationship with Wooyoung.

He was the new part-time barista hired at Heechul’s bakery-café and always took the morning shift on weekdays. She’d order her usual (“I’ll have a large coffee latte with a blueberry muffin, please.”) and Wooyoung would be the one to take the order (“Uh... Uh, um, that’ll be 3700 won, ma’am, no-uh- miss!”). She first thought he was extremely weird; his eyes were always looking down when facing her (she thought he was staring at her

chest, he swore he wasn't, "I was really shy, and so I kept looking at the table instead. You were always so beautiful...").

She came with Hyoyeon once (Hyoyeon denies coming willingly, saying she was manhandled and dragged instead, when telling the story. Tiffany swats her arm for that) and she noticed Wooyoung practically breezed through Hyoyeon's order and handed over her herbal tea and BLT ("A little more B, and not so much LT.") with a grin and a thank you. His happy smile slipped when Tiffany came up to the counter, and his eyes diverted ("-to her chest." "The table! I was looking at the table!") down to the countertop. She had wondered if he had something against her, but she was really hungry at that point and she just wanted something to eat.

After the incident with Hyoyeon, Tiffany paid a little more attention to Wooyoung when he handled her order. She noticed that he always took a bit longer with hers, such as fidgeting with the flimsy cardboard sleeve before sliding it onto her cup, or carefully selecting a (bigger) muffin before placing it into a small paper bag. When he came back with her order, he'd thrust it stiffly towards her and stammer "T-Thank you for waiting. Here's y-your order. P-please visit us again." She didn't think much of it (maybe just cemented her impression of him as weird).

It was Sunny, during their shared class, who noticed the reason why Wooyoung fiddles around with the cardboard sleeve.

It was a tiny habit of Sunny's (born out of sheer boredom - there were many instances of it) to have something occupying her hands, whether it be twisting her ring around her finger or twirling a pen like a baton. On one morning, she snagged Tiffany's cup of coffee, and with her pen raised, was about to doodle a new masterpiece when she noticed something was already written on it.

"Hey, Fany-ah." Tiffany yawned and nodded at Sunny, "What's up?" Sunny poked the coffee cup with her pen, "Someone left you a message."

Tiffany blinked owlishly at her, "What's it say?"

“Hello. Please be careful, this tasty coffee is really hot! I hope you have a nice day.’ And a giant deformed smiley.”

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Tiffany thinks it’s (weirdly) adorable when Wooyoung’s childish side comes out, like when he gives her his big, wide toothy smiles or when he’s preoccupied with window shopping when walking down the street with her.

He was still sometimes shy around her, and was mostly quiet (unless if there was something that caught his attention, then he becomes a motormouth) with a serious (stoic) feel.

He liked making gag jokes to lift the mood (“**I good at language**, *satori*, **y’know?**” He gestured with his hands in his mangled English (Tiffany snorts amusedly at the ridiculousness) and was always thoughtful when taking care of her.

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When Tiffany introduces Wooyoung to Taeyeon, the two greet each other shyly, their eyes boring holes into the ground after they bowed. (And if Tiffany was being completely honest, it was just plain weird and uncomfortable.) But the two quickly grew on each other, and were soon teasing one another, fooling around and pulling pranks on the unsuspecting Tiffany.

Tiffany thinks she made a big mistake letting those two meet. They get more annoying when they’re together.

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She *knows* it’s a mistake when Taeyeon introduced Yuri and Yoona to Wooyoung. (And when Wooyoung introduces the girls to Chansung and Taecyeon. The pranking and teasing jokes haven’t stopped since then.)

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Jessica's and Taeyeon's first meeting with Sooyoung and Yoona wasn't a particularly good meeting. Jessica likes to dub it "The Close Call Traumatic Meeting 2", but that was only because two servings of spicy ramyun (anything liquid, really) found Jessica's clothes to be extremely attractive at the time. ("The Close Call Traumatic Meeting 1" was hers and Taeyeon's first meeting. But Jessica feels the correct title should be "The Adorable Stuttering Kid Meeting".)

The two older girls stood waiting in line at the university cafeteria. The two passed the time quietly discussing a newly released novel, when the two taller girls in front (Sooyoung and Yoona; the "Shikshin Duo", as named by Hyoyeon and Yuri) both swiftly turned around, each carefully balancing a tray laden with food. By a chance of poor judgement, Sooyoung had turned a bit too quickly and bumped her tray against Yoona's arm, tilting the contents forward towards Jessica.

Taeyeon, who caught the odd movement in the corner of her eye, quickly jerked Jessica to the side by her arm, narrowly missing the food projectiles.

"Yah! What's with y-"

*Splat.*

Four pairs of eyes widen at the same time.

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"Well... at least the ramyun's a *wonderful* addition to the ugly white floor."

Jessica slaps Taeyeon's arm. Hard.

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Tiffany realizes that Taeyeon has absolutely no sense of direction when the latter decides to forego cooking and eat out one night. She lets the older girl lead the way, since she claimed that there was a restaurant close by and has a “*seriously* great selection food”.

Tiffany doesn't mind walking (she figured it's a good way to work up an appetite), but she started getting wary of the older girl when she (aimlessly) led her around the streets of downtown Seoul for fifteen minutes straight. She hooked a finger around Taeyeon's own and gave it a light tug, “Taeyeon-ah.” The older girl jerked to a stop and turned to face her, “Yeah? What's up, Tiffany?” she smiled at her.

“... Are we lost?”

A terse moment of silence.

“No~” Taeyeon's voice wavered a bit as she dragged out the last consonant, “What makes you say that?”

Tiffany stared at Taeyeon. “We've been walking around for almost twenty minutes and down this road at least twice.”

Taeyeon turned her head to avoid the (uncomfortable) stare, “N-No kidding? You sure we walked down here twice?” She pushed her slipping glasses up nervously.

With their fingers still hooked together (lest the older girl tried to run), Tiffany inched her face closer and narrowed her eyes.

Taeyeon bit her lip and cowered a bit, “W-We... We might be... a li-little bit... lost.” She replied meekly, raising her hand and bringing her index finger and thumb closely together.

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"It must have been a miracle we didn't get lost when we went to your house last year," Tiffany grinned as she takes a large bite out of her hamburger. (The two opted to eat at the first fast food joint they saw, instead of wandering some more for the illusive restaurant. Tiffany was overjoyed for her double cheeseburger, whereas Taeyeon frowned and childishly whined for Korean food.)

Taeyeon pouted, "Miyong, you're mean!" (She contemplated kicking the younger girl in the shins for a moment.) She chomps down (hard) on a french fry instead.

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When Old Man Winter came by, bringing with him cold, biting winds and snow, the girls all bundled themselves up with long scarves and thick jackets. That is all except Tiffany, who walked around campus in her thin sweaters, simple skinny jeans and leather jacket - as if she never felt the cold chill seep through her skin.

Taeyeon fussed over her roommate's clothes, telling her it's getting colder and colder and she should wear more layers. Tiffany eyesmiled and told her its fine, and she's not cold at all. Taeyeon frowns and looks at her skeptically but decides to let it go for now. (But only after she wrapped her thick, blue scarf around the younger girl, of course.)

She later understands why, when she notices Jessica and Sunny constantly grabbing hold of Tiffany's hands immediately whenever they meet. Curious, she asks them one time, "Why do you keep holding Tiffany's hands? You've got gloves, don't you?"

Sunny smirks and wags a finger at her, "Tiffany's hands are better than gloves," she says, Jessica nods silently in agreement (and squeezes Tiffany's hand a bit harder as if it would suck the heat out). The girl being (wo)manhandled just blushes and feigns ignorance to the current conversation, leaving her hands slack in the other two's hold.

Taeyeon tilts her head and furrows her brows in confusion. Jessica sighs and pulls Taeyeon a bit closer before adjusting her hold on Tiffany's hand and (lightly) slapping the girl's hand onto Taeyeon's cheek. (Sunny snorts at Jessica's method of answering, before joining in and slapping Tiffany's other hand onto the older girl's cheek.)

“Yah! You’re like a furnace, Tiffany!” Taeyeon cries as she reflexively cups her hands over Tiffany’s.

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Taeyeon now makes it a habit to hold onto Tiffany’s hands for a bit before tugging on her gloves when heading out.

She reasons that it’ll keep her warm up until she gets to class. (Tiffany snickers and thinks that it’s such a childish, yet adorable reason.)

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When winter break rolls by, Taeyeon smiles at the younger girl and asked if she wanted to come visit her parent’s house again. Tiffany perked up at the idea and nods, before abruptly stopping, eyes wide as she remembered something.

“Wait... I think Daddy’s staying home this time. I... I think I’ll stay here, Taeyeon-ah.” She gives the older girl a rueful smile.

Taeyeon slowly nods in agreement, “No, its fine. You haven’t seen your father in a long time, right? I’m sure he misses you a lot.” She smiles (a bit crestfallen), “Say ‘Hello’ to him for me?”

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Taeyeon’s mother (and little sister) start nagging her immediately when she returned home by herself. Asking what happened to Tiffany (“Nothing happened, Hayeon-ah. She’s just spending the break with her dad.”), where she is (“I don’t know. At the dorm? Her house?”), why she’s staying at the dorm (“I just told you, mom. She’s with her dad.”), how is she eating (Taeyeon frowns, “What? I don’t know. Fine? She can take care of herself, you know.”) and so on and so on.

When she (finally) escaped from her mother's impromptu grilling session (she lied and said she needed to go to the washroom really, *really* badly), Taeyeon flopped down onto her bed and seriously considers calling up Tiffany, and (phone-)ditching the girl to let her fend for herself from her nagging (concerned) mother.

Taeyeon does do it in the end, the phone-ditching, and the phone call lasts for a good hour (twenty minutes were hogged by Hayeon cutely babbling endlessly over random topics). Taking refuge in her room, she momentarily wondered if her roommate would kill her when she gets back to the dorm.

The next day when she turns on her phone, she's received a total of nine texts from the girl, starting from annoyance then progressing to thankfulness.

Taeyeon grinned. It was worth it.

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Taeyeon returns back to the dorm a week and a half later with two large bags completely stuffed with food.

Tiffany stifles her giggles with a hand as she watches the older girl waddle down the hall and teeter side to side when she attempts to get through the door. She takes pity on her and takes a bag away from Taeyeon, sneaking a peek inside.

"Apparently, my mum still thinks you're a walking stick. She packed all that food for you," Taeyeon grunts as she drops the remaining bag onto the kitchen counter. "She made a couple rolls of cheese kimbap for you too. She said you liked them last time."

Tiffany doesn't know how to express the overwhelming feelings inside her besides pulling Taeyeon in for a tight hug.

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*Click. **Snap!***

Tiffany winced and rubbed the base of her palms in her eyes. ('Damn flash,' she thinks) It was a routine for Taeyeon to snap candid polaroids now. Ever since the older girl enrolled in a first year photography course as her elective for second semester, she's been taking pictures of anything and everything. Taeyeon had a childish grin plastered on her face as she waved the photo paper in the air to develop it faster.

Tiffany sighed and wished the damned polaroid camera would just burn. Or find out who gave the camera to her roommate and so she could kick their ass. (Jiyong sneezed.)

"Why are you taking my pictures only, Taetae?"

Taeyeon paused in her waving and glanced at her, "I don't only take yours, Miyoung-ah. I take pictures of everything. It just so happens you're photogenic." She turned her focus back onto the photo, "Hey~ This turned out pretty good!" She waved her creation in front of Tiffany, "I think I'm a genius. Maybe natural talent?" she self-praised herself. Tiffany scoffed and swiped the photo from Taeyeon's hands and took a look at it.

"Yah! How is this a good photo? Photogenic? Half my head is cut off!"

"It's called creativity. **Style**. It's *art*." Taeyeon offhandedly replies in a mix of English and Korean, before snapping another photo of Tiffany's annoyed face.

The next several polaroids show Tiffany getting up from her usual seat by the couch (after carefully setting aside her laptop) and attempting to grab Taeyeon's camera (unsuccessfully. Taeyeon backpedalled out of the dorm and ran to Sunny's).

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Sooyoung (being in the same photography course) attempts to seriously critique Taeyeon's photos but ends up laughing over all of them.

She waves a set of polaroids, "What's up with these photos? It's like a play-by-play story of Tiffany trying to beat the crap out of you or something."

“It’s because they are.”

Sooyoung snorts and lightly tosses the photos back onto the table. “I would too, if you took such crappy photos of me.” She grabs the next set of photos, “... Where’s your face, Taeyeon-ah? It’s just a mass of white with four black dots.”

Taeyeon’s cheeks colour a bit, “It’s the brightness setting, alright? I like it bright!” she grumbled in annoyance, “You’re just as mean as Jiyong-oppa and Byunghee-oppa! They both called me a ‘white faced ghost’ when I showed it to them.” She pouted.

(Byunghee had teasingly compared her self camera photos by lifting them up side-by-side, parallel to her face. He stroked his goatee as he jokingly ‘critiqued’ her photos, “Why’d you take a picture of a wall, Taeyeon? It’s such a *dirty* wall too. It’s got black dots and lines all over.”)

Sooyoung snickered, “They’re not that far off mark.” She mumbled under her breath. She looks over Taeyeon’s digital photos on the computer and hums in approval as she clicks through them. “These on the other hand aren’t that bad. Nice composition, good balance, decent lighting... These are pretty good, Taeyeon-ah.”

Taeyeon looks up hopefully at the younger girl, “Yeah? You think so?”

“Yeah.” She absentmindedly nods her head, “My only advice is... Don’t take pictures of people. Actually, just don’t take any of Tiffany.”

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Taeyeon pays no heed to Sooyoung’s advice and continued to take Tiffany’s photos. (“**Oh my god**, Taeyeon-ah!” Tiffany swats her on the arm.)

And Jessica’s. (“Yah! No!” Jessica quickly shoves Taeyeon away and covers her face with a book.)

And Yuri's. ("Did you get my good side?" Yuri whips her hair to the side and flashed a wide grin.)

And Hyoyeon's. ("Ugh, it looks so awkward, Taeyeon. Do it again. No, wait, let me take yours. No-" Hyoyeon chewed on her lip, feeling a bit indecisive.)

And Sunny's. ("Will you cut it out, Taeyeon?" Sunny growls and throws a stuffed cow at the older girl.)

And Sooyoung's. ("They better turn out good, tiny tots." Sooyoung narrows her eyes in warning.)

And Yoona's. ("Taeyeon unnie! What are you doing? Half my face is gone!" Yoona scrunches her face and jokingly demands for a retake before smiling widely for the camera.)

She finally stopped taking their pictures when both Tiffany and Jessica ganged up on the shorter girl and slapped her arms repeatedly. Hard. ("Aaah! Why are you two so violent?")

(That wasn't true, she still did. Just more discreetly.)

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It was Taeyeon's birthday again, and Tiffany felt it was customary for the birthday girl to get dead drunk. Tiffany likes to call it "The Tradition" (with capitals, because it emphasizes on its *importance*), even though they only held it once last year.

"If we do it more, it'll *become* a tradition!" reasons Tiffany, as she roots through their small fridge for drinks. Sooyoung and Hyoyeon both agree with a loud "Hear, hear!" and a (barely connecting) high five. Yoona quirks an eyebrow at the older girls, sitting in between Yuri and Jessica; both older girls ignoring the (idiocy) havoc around them, and instead, carefully paint the younger girl's finger nails. Sunny just yawns and slumps over Taeyon's shoulder, getting ready for a quick power nap on the living room floor.

Taeyeon narrows her eyes at her roommate. "Why drinking, and why me?" Her eyes glint behind her glasses.

"You're too serious!" One girl pipes up.

"You never drink." Another deadpans.

"You're too short." Two blurts out.

"Yah! Who said that!" Taeyeon winces when Sunny shouted. (Sooyoung presses her lips together tightly, keeping silent. Beside her, Hyoyeon doubles over in silent laughter.)

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Surprisingly enough, it was Jessica who first piped up when she clinked her beer bottle against Sunny's to get everyone's attention. "We. ... We should play a game." She says with her eyes narrowing a bit as she smacked her lips. Yoona giggles and lolls her head towards the older (tipsy) girl. "Heh... What game, unnie?"

"... I... I don't know." She stutters a bit after spending a long moment thinking. Tiffany knocks her head against Jessica's as she laughs, clapping her hands, which sets off a chain reaction of giggles everywhere.

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"OK, OK, OK. I got it!" Sooyoung claps her hands loudly to get the girls' attention, "First impressions!" She drags a plate of fruit towards her with a fork, popping a slice of apple in her mouth, "First impressions meeting the birthday girl!" She clapped her hands again, "Go!" She points her fork towards Tiffany.

"Kid genius." The girls hummed and collectively nodded at that. (Taeyeon just purses her lips and takes a sip from her glass of juice.)



“Awkward kid.” Yuri snickers at Hyoyeon (and discreetly raises a hand for a high five, Jessica giggles and slaps Hyoyeon on the arm).

“Tall.” Everyone choked on their drinks when they heard Sunny’s answer. “What? We’re childhood friends! She was tall as a kid!” (Taeyeon proudly beamed at hearing ‘tall’.)

“Short.” Everyone sputters in laughter after hearing Sooyoung. Taeyeon whips a peanut at the girl.

“... Cute, clumsy middle school kid?” Jessica shrugs. “At least it’s not elementary,” mumbles Taeyeon as she takes another sip from her glass. Jessica grins, overhearing the older girl’s mumblings.

“A cool aura.” says Yoona. Everyone tilts their head side to side, some with their arms crossed as they mulled it over. Taeyeon leaned over to give Yoona grateful side hug. “Finally! Someone called me--”

Yuri cuts in the middle of Taeyeon’s cry of gratitude, “A giant dork.”

Peals of laughter and clapping rang throughout the small room. (Taeyeon quietly fumes and chucks a handful of peanuts at the laughing Yuri.)

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The morning after was a horrid affair. By the time the birthday party died down, it was well into 2 in the morning, and all the girls had passed out on the floor. (Empty beer bottles and soft drinks lay littered upright on the floor, with poker cards scattered in neat little piles around them.)

Taeyeon wakes up feeling like a déjà vu - her mouth feeling oh-so-dry and a pounding headache that’s trying to hammer her eyeballs out from behind. She weakly clutches her head as she grumbles at the girls for somehow swapping or spiking her juice last night (again) as she attempts to get up off the floor to look for her glasses.

She gingerly lifts her head from its soft pillow (someone's stomach) and sluggishly shoves a leg off from her stomach. ('We're lucky it's the weekend.' She thinks to herself.)

She finds her legs half asleep, seeing that both her legs were covered with long limbs tossed haphazardly over hers. She wriggles out from underneath the limbs, feeling the prickling sensation of pins and needles. She makes the move to get up, but something snags onto her shirt, pulling her back down towards to the floor.

She squints blurrily as she turns her head to see what got caught on her shirt. A pale hand tightened around the hem of her shirt into a fist.

"Taetae. Too early. Sleep." is all that is mumbled.

Taeyeon resigns herself to sleep as she slowly lowers her head to rest back on her human pillow.

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When they all finally wake up, it was one in the afternoon. Yoona and Yuri both growl and blindly shuffle to the kitchen, arms tossed over each other's shoulders for support, as they heroically searched for water (and cups and maybe some aspirin).

Resting upright with their prone forms on the tiny couch, Hyoyeon, Jessica and Sooyoung continued to doze off, every once in a while letting out a tiny yawn.

Tiffany and Sunny both woke up feeling rather refreshed, despite the heavy drinking from last night. Sunny pulls Taeyeon up from her resting place (plastered) beside Tiffany and pushed her towards the washroom. ("N- wait. Where're m'glasses?" Taeyeon rasps out.)

Tiffany lets out a loud yawn, stretching her arms above her. Seeing Sunny come back from ushering Taeyeon, she childishly stuck her arms out towards the older girl, "Pull me up~ Soonkyu." Sunny sighed at her exasperatedly and reluctantly tugs the girl up.

(Sunny was really tempted to just drop Tiffany when she pulled the younger girl up halfway. It would be sweet revenge for calling her ‘Soonkyu’.)

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When everyone’s somewhat sobered up, Yuri takes it upon herself to make lunch. (She held her hand up to stop Hyoyeon when the latter volunteered herself to cook.) Both Sooyoung and Yoona start hounding the girl as she cooks, and the others watch on, amused at the free entertainment.

“Yuri-unnie! Yuri-unnie! Add more mushrooms!” Sooyoung snags some ham off a plate as Yoona tugs on Yuri’s sleeve, distracting her. Yuri whips her head towards Sooyoung about to scold the younger girl, only to have Yoona grab and stuff a handful of shredded cheese into her mouth.

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Tiffany meticulously cuts her omelette into square pieces, separating squares with mushrooms away from the rest. Jessica snickers at the girl’s obsessive dislike for mushrooms, and flicks the pickle slices off her plate (and onto Yuri’s. Yuri rolls her eyes and pops them in her mouth.).

Sunny takes on the Shikshin Duo as they battle for the last sausage omelette. Sooyoung yelps when Yoona smacks her hand with a spoon. Sunny, seeing the open opportunity, drives forward with both her chopsticks and spoon, snagging half of the omelette in triumph.

Tiffany jolts in her seat when a pair of chopsticks invades her plate and scrapes the (discarded) mushrooms squares up onto a spoon. She looks up and sees Taeyeon quietly chewing on the (stolen) squares and slides half her cheese omelette onto her plate.

“It’s a trade.” Taeyeon cheekily grins.

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As they didn't have a proper television in their tiny dorm, Tiffany proposes to watch movies on her laptop instead one day. "Taeyeon-ah, which movie do you like?" she asks, hands holding out a jumble of DVDs all fanned out.

Taeyeon swallows the rest of her water in her mouth and dumps the rest in the sink. She wipes off her lips with the back of her hand, "Movies?" Her hand reaches out for the collection in the younger girl's hands. "But these are all sappy, romantic ones. Are there any horror or at least a thriller flick here?"

Tiffany grimaces at the thought of horror movies; "No." is her curt reply.

Frowning, Taeyeon tugs the stack of DVDs away from Tiffany's grasp, trots over to their couch and dumps the movies onto the cushions. "Wha- weren't you gonna..." surprised, Tiffany trails off her sentence when the older girl quickly walks by her and into her own room.

Taeyeon is all smiles when she walks back out a minute later, waving a DVD case smugly at her. "We should watch this!" Tiffany narrows her eyes suspiciously at the case, "What is it?"

"The Silence of the Lambs."

Tiffany pulls another face and starts shaking her head, pulling her arms up to form an 'x' over her chest. "Nononononononononono! I can't watch scary movies, Taetae! I always have to hide and scream and- AAAAAAH! I just can't watch them!"

Taeyeon chuckles and tugs Tiffany's (rigid) arms down. "It's not scary at all, Miyoung-ah. And if you're scared, you can just run to your room, or hide behind a cushion." Tiffany frowns.

"Don't you trust me, Miyoung?"

Tiffany scoffs and crosses her arms across her chest, “*Trust* has nothing to do with watching scary movies like *this*,” she waves a hand at the DVD. “Besides, doesn’t this have that cannibal murderer? Hanny-whatsit?” She shudders a bit. “Let’s just watch one of mine.”

Taeyeon lets loose a loud laugh, “Hanny-whatsit? You mean Hannibal? Yeah, it does, but there’s no people eating, I swear. C’mon, watch it with me? It’s a really great film, and it’s really not scary at all. I promise.”

“... If you’re lying, I swear I’m never talking to you ever again.”

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Tiffany has her eyes screwed tightly shut as she hides her face behind a cushion. The older girl sitting beside her is watching the laptop screen in front of them with rapt attention, eyes never straying away from the wide screen monitor.

There was a bloodcurdling scream from the speakers. Like a reciprocating echo, Tiffany screamed as well. She pulled Taeyeon’s arm towards herself and hid her face behind the older girl’s shoulder, the cushion now pressed hard against her ear.

Taeyeon just chuckled.

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By the time the ending credits were scrolling up across the screen, Tiffany had abandoned the (deformed) cushion and instead had buried her face into Taeyeon’s (warm) upper back, both hands clapped over her ears.

Taeyeon shrugs her shoulders to get Tiffany’s attention, “Tiffany, the movie’s over.”

Tiffany raises her head and stares hard at Taeyeon, “Taetae! You promised it wasn’t scary!” She slaps the older girl on the shoulder with her discarded cushion. Taeyeon giggles and tries to block the (soft) hits.

“Yeah, it wasn’t scary to *me*.”

Tiffany renews her vigour and starts hitting her harder.

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Taeyeon manages to finally stop the younger girl’s maniac swatting by grabbing hold of her wrists with her hands. She winces, feeling the lingering smarting pain on her left cheek, courtesy of the cushion corner. (Tiffany doesn’t see her reaction, and is instead still huffing at her.) Taeyeon sighs and stands up (adjusts her glasses), hands tugging Tiffany’s own to get her to follow her.

“What are you trying to do, Taeyeon?” A snuffle.

Taeyeon wordlessly pulls the girl towards the kitchenette, gently pushing her into a seat. She makes her way towards their fridge, pulling open the freezer compartment. Tiffany furrows her brows as she watches the older girl pull out and shift frozen food around.

“What are you doing?” The question is repeated.

“Looking for this,” Taeyeon finally answers back, smiling at her as she holds out a brand new pint of Chunky Chocolate Fudge ice cream towards her. Tiffany widened her eyes at seeing the ice cream, “Didn’t Hyoyeon and Yuri eat the last pint?”

Taeyeon grinned proudly, “I *especially* hid this one.” She drops the small dessert tub down onto the counter and began searching for spoons. Tiffany pries open the tub while waiting for Taeyeon. (The older girl mentally curses her laziness when she realizes all their cutlery - save for one, is sitting food-crustily smug in their sink.) She wipes off the last (clean) spoon with a dishtowel and hands it over to Tiffany. “Here.”

Tiffany gingerly accepts the spoon, “Where’s yours?” Taeyeon smiles wryly and replies, “They’re all in the sink.” The younger girl snickers, “We should probably wash those,

huh?” She stabs the spoon into the smooth ice cream and scoops out a chunk. She looks at Taeyeon and opens her mouth.

“Ahhhh~ Open your mouth, Taetae.” She holds out a spoonful of ice cream towards the older girl.

Taeyeon blinks and slowly opens her mouth.

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The confession comes out of the blue one morning when the two are sharing the bathroom (‘Damn morning classes,’ Taeyeon thinks); Tiffany washing her face while Taeyeon is off to the side (furiously) brushing her teeth.

Tiffany was wiping off the excess water droplets from her face when her eyes catch Taeyeon’s reflection in the mirror. Her face takes on a dazed look as her eyes subconsciously follow the older girl’s movements; pacing around back and forth across the tiled floor, her arm constantly in motion brushing her teeth. She feels like she’s living inside a (day)dream as she watches the older girl.

*“I think I’m kinda in love with you.”* she blurts out.

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**END**