

humyourheart



Sixteen Hours To None

Almost three years ago, they met each other online on an international Korean forum. It was a place where Koreans all over the world would come together and talk. It was a place where they made long-lasting friends, some coincidental business partners and for a handful of lucky souls, they would meet someone worthwhile for them. For Tiffany Hwang Miyoung, she went there on one boring Thursday night in hopes to improve on her preposterous Korean. She was born and raised in USA, Los Angeles, California. She had taken the Korean language as an extracurricular subject in college, thinking that since she was Korean, it'd be a breeze for her. It turns out, though, that she was embarrassingly bad at it. In her defense, she wasn't the worst in class – yet – but she was beaten so badly on the previous test by her classmates, including 2 blonde Beverly Hills girls, an American-born Chinese boy and also an American-born Japanese boy. She decided it was definitely time to pull her socks up. Not that she had anything against rich blondes or other Asians but it was extremely embarrassing to know that they had done better on a test of her own mother tongue language. Another reason might be how her pride had been painfully stomped on all over by her own mother's kitchen slippers when the latter had laughed so hard the moment Tiffany had told her as she was making pasta for dinner. Her mother had a laughing fit, her eyes were tearing up and their dinner almost caught fire due to her mother's hysterical laughter. 'It wasn't even funny', Tiffany thought grumpily as she stomped to her room to wash up and wait for dinner.

Tiffany came across that forum after dinner and one long dreading essay that night as she was surfing for anything that had Korean in it. Still sulking from earlier events of that day, she clicked on a random link that appeared on her Google search and explored the site. She had found it interesting so she made an account and briefly wrote on her profile - making sure she didn't give out any personal details - so that she would be able to go further into the site to glance through all the topics made which were thankfully in both Korean and English. Almost two hours through and she thought - since the forum was filled with Korean people - maybe someone would be willing to tutor her online somehow. It was better than nothing; she could use all the help she could get since she was a little hesitant to ask her classmates whom she wasn't that close to for help. Well, that, and her pride would take a major blow in the guts. She got on the chat box on the site that had a few people chatting together in a language medley of Korean and English.

-TiffanyHwang; Hi. Would anyone be willing to help me with my Korean? I'm so bad at it. L -

That was what she typed, in the middle of their conversation. She waited for a reply, any reply, from anyone, for almost 10 minutes; just staring at the screen as her message moved up and disappeared from the box as they were too involved in their conversation to notice her small cry for help. Okay,

maybe ‘a cry for help’ would be exaggerating but still, it would’ve been nice to at least be acknowledged since she was in need of help. She sighed; feeling disappointed that no one even bothered to reply her in any way and was about leave the site, thinking maybe it was just a silly idea anyway, to ask a bunch of strangers online to help her. She was about the log out and head to bed when a private message beeped and popped up on her screen.

-TaeyeonKim; Hi. How about you help me with my English and I’ll help you with your Korean too. Deal? J-

Tiffany unconsciously smiled; maybe there were nice ones in the site after all. She clicked on ‘TaeyeonKim’s profile and went through it before replying. She felt like she should at least check the profile before talking to the person; he or she must’ve checked her profile too anyway.

Kim Taeyeon - 김태연 in hangul – was a girl and she was a few months older than Tiffany but her age nonetheless. She lived in South Korea, born in Jeonju, North Jeolla; where exactly that was, Tiffany has no idea. She was still a student and was currently residing in Seoul; that, Tiffany knew where.

As Tiffany replied her that night, they decided to add each other in skype for easier communication. It took them exactly half an hour through the conversation to talk casually with each other like they’ve known each other for a long time, and exactly an hour to start tease each other like it’s the most natural thing to do with someone they’ve just met online. She slept at 4am in the morning when Taeyeon had figured out their time difference and had to push her to go to bed. She was late for class the next day but smiled when she remembered she had made a new friend.

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6 months through and Tiffany knew Kim Taeyeon almost as well as she knew her best friend, having organized their 16 hour time difference and going on skype for at least 5 times a week. Kim Taeyeon was stubborn, shy and reserved as she was humble, funny and absolutely adorable. She had an almost non-existing social life due to being timid around strangers and she didn’t seem to mind since she was really focused on her studies. She made Tiffany smile a lot and was laidback. She succeeded in helping Tiffany well on her Korean too. Tiffany had improved tremendously on her Korean, jumping grades from a C- to a solid B+; saving her pride from getting damaged by the blondes and other Asians since she was now somewhat in the same rank as them, losing only to 2 straight A’s students. As for Taeyeon, her English had improved as well. A little, but still, she improved. Tiffany wondered in the beginning why Taeyeon wanted help in the first place since she got to know that Taeyeon was already getting B’s for her English tests. Tiffany understood why as they got closer.

Taeyeon was the youngest child, having one older brother who was a year older and divorced parents. Her parents had gotten divorced right before she had graduated from high school back in Jeonju and when they did; her mother had wanted nothing to do with them so their father took her and her brother with him and moved to Seoul for them to start a new life. The divorce was a year ago and Taeyeon's father was still working two shifts of labour work to compensate the cost of two of his children's school fees, bills and food just so they could all live comfortably. Her brother couldn't stand seeing their aging father struggle alone and started to work part-time to help with their income. He had forbidden Taeyeon from doing the same, saying that he'd take care of it and that she should just focus on studying.

Taeyeon moved to stay at her college's dorm since both of them were hardly home and it was relatively safer for her to stay in a dorm rather than being alone at their place till wee hours of the morning.

Tiffany knew of their struggles just like she was there to witness them because on many occasions, the stress and the burden Taeyeon carried on her shoulders took a toll on her and Tiffany was there to lend a listening ear and offer comforting words. Tiffany might not be able to fully understand what Taeyeon was going through, having happily married parents who both earned more than enough for her and her younger sister, and she could only imagine feeling like she was dragging her loved ones down. On those many occasions, Tiffany wished they didn't have 5969 miles between them because she knew Taeyeon refused to talk to anyone about her feelings, keeping them all bottled up most of the time and didn't have a lot of close friends to confide in either. She could lose all the sleep in the world if she could make Taeyeon feel at least a tiny bit better.

8 months and they had started to voice call each other. It was comforting in its own way, soothing even. It started with the excuse that they both had needed to work on their pronunciation and speech of the other language, which was true. It was then too that she had found out that Taeyeon had slight difficulty with enunciating some of the words. It came out oddly hilarious sometimes and it had made Tiffany laugh countless times. It surprised her though that Taeyeon could speak without a noticeable Korean accent which she was expecting to hear because other than that, she was pretty fluent in English.

Soon, it became a routine for them to call but they would always converse in English. Always, and sometimes it made her wonder if Taeyeon really did want to work on her speech or that she just knew that Tiffany felt more comfortable speaking in English instead. That was when Tiffany realized just how Taeyeon's voice made her feel something as she spoke. It was so strong, rich and warm that it made her feel something. She knew exactly what it was that she felt but she really didn't know how it should be described. Taeyeon's voice had made her want to see how she looked like so badly because all she could picture her as was someone so beautiful. She never prodded Taeyeon into video calling though, knowing how reserved and timid the girl could be. Surprisingly, though, it was Taeyeon who

initiated the first video call a month after they started calling and Tiffany had been right. She was, indeed, so beautiful with gentle brown eyes, milky fair skin and the cutest smile. The girl had shyly grinned, revealing a small charming dimple at the side of her chin and Tiffany thought there couldn't have been anyone any cuter than Kim Taeyeon.

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A year since the first introduction and all personal barriers had been dropped. Even addresses had been exchanged for random gifts or letters, birthdays had been celebrated and comfort level had reached a whole new height. A year and Tiffany had her head propped on a hand as she did her essay in front of her laptop. She frowned at the hangul characters she had written. Picking up her paper, she turned it towards the screen and asked the person who was sitting at the other side of the screen, waiting patiently for her to finish the remaining of her essay. "Is this right, Taeyeon? The last few sentences, are they written right?"

She watched as the girl looked up from the book she was reading and inched forward closer to the screen to read, squinting her eyes as she did so. She held back a grin, knowing how shy Taeyeon would get if she were to tell her how cute she was outright. She was, though. Taeyeon was beyond cute in every way and Tiffany kind of adored her in all those ways too. Her voice interrupted Tiffany's thoughts, "*Yeah, that's right... your handwriting though, seriously...*"

Tiffany rolled her eyes in fake annoyance as Taeyeon chuckled, making a grin appearing on her face anyway. "Okay, I'm done for today." She put her paper aside, tidied her stuff up and stretched as Taeyeon closed her book and placed it aside as well.

"*Hey, um... can I ask you a question?*" Taeyeon asked when they were done. She seemed nervous and it made Tiffany curious.

"Sure, what is it?" Tiffany replied, propping her head on a hand again, staring intently at the suddenly fidgeting girl on the other side.

"*What do you think about... um... a girl... uh... liking another girl?*" Tiffany raised her eyebrows at the question as Taeyeon looked down, still restlessly fidgety. A chuckle escaped Tiffany after a few seconds of pondering on her reply and it made Taeyeon look up.

"Sweetie, I live in America. We're pretty open about this. Well, at least here in Cali," she paused, weighing her options about going on. Looking at Taeyeon, she trusted that the girl wouldn't react negatively. Taeyeon was a mature person, despite having her childish and playful moments. "I don't know how to say this in a more subtle way... but uh, I... go both ways? I hope you don't mind," she let

out an awkward chuckle.

Taeyeon looked surprised but not disgusted and Tiffany was glad. She was right, Taeyeon's... well, Taeyeon's Taeyeon. Another moment of silence as Taeyeon had her eyebrows furrowed slightly and head tilted to the side, looking thoughtful. *"I think... I only go one way, though..."*

"The straight road, you mean?" Tiffany joked, grinning. Her playful expression changed in a second as Taeyeon shook her head slowly. "...the other way?" she asked carefully. A nervous nod and pursed lips answered her. "Are you sure?"

A nod again, *"I think so... I've never really, you know, been that attracted to guys. I think I was having a small crush on my lab partner back when I was in high school once. Although I thought it was admiration at that time. It never escalated more than a small crush though... I didn't even care that much when she had a boyfriend... Okay, maybe I was just a little tiny bit disappointed."* Taeyeon paused again, taking a deep breath. She bit her lip nervously, like she was weighing out her options as Tiffany did previously. She took another deep breath and said, *"I think... I like someone now though... and- and all I can think about is her. Like, all day, every day."*

"Oh?" Her heart sank with the hope that had appeared briefly when she thought maybe, just maybe, she stood a chance and Tiffany didn't expect it to hurt that much. She knew she liked Taeyeon, for a while now, but she didn't know just how much until then. She kept the hurt away and kept her casual relaxed face on. "Who? Have you mentioned her before?"

Taeyeon nodded, chuckling, *"Probably. Do you think... I should tell her?"*

'No, you're mine', Tiffany wanted to say but she gave her a small smile instead. "Depends, do you think she swings the same way too?" A nod as a response and Tiffany inwardly sighed, thinking to herself about how much she'd regret saying the next few words. "Then...go ahead. Try, you'd never know, maybe she likes you too."

A faint colour of pink made its way to Taeyeon's cheeks and Tiffany wondered why. Taeyeon looked down again and mumbled almost incoherently, *"Do you... maybe?"* Tiffany heard it and frowned, confused. Wondering if she was supposed to hear that or if it was even spoken to her, Tiffany asked, "Me?" A shy nod from Taeyeon and Tiffany tilted her head. "Do I what, Taeyeon?"

Taeyeon cleared her throat and looked up shyly. She rested her arms on her table and looked at the camera, looking right at Tiffany. She blushed furiously but kept her voice steady as she asked clearly, *"Do you, maybe, like me too?"*

A few seconds passed and Taeyeon's eyes had diverted away from the camera back to her screen, probably watching Tiffany's expression. As the question sunk in and Tiffany understood what it meant, she looked at her camera just as Taeyeon had done and grinned. "Yeah, I kinda do... a lot."

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“...So we all went to this pizza palace and Simon thought it was funny to tell Jessica that the pizza she just took a bite in had cucumber seasonings on it,” Tiffany said, animatedly, to the girl listening attentively to her on her laptop screen. “Jessi totally freaked, almost choked and immediately spat it out... right in his face! A masterpiece right there, there was this piece of I-don’t-want-to-know-what hanging right under his nose.”

Taeyeon burst into that one of a kind laugh and it made Tiffany grin widely as she watched the former put her head on the table as she laughed heartily and snorted once in a while. When Taeyeon had finally calmed down, she wiped a tear from the corner of her eyes; an adorable lop-sided smile lingered on her face. *“That must’ve been so epic. I bet Jessica was so pissed after that.”*

“Oh, that she was. Her girlfriend, Yuri –remember Yuri? –, yeah, so Yuri had to literally hold her down because she was about to jump over the table and strangle him. It took a lot of coaxing for her to calm down and I was laughing so hard, she almost threw her plate at me,” she replied, chuckling as she remembered that very close call of having a plate to her face by her own best friend. She made a mental note to buy Yuri a meal as an appreciative gesture for saving her face.

Taeyeon smiled, she propped her elbow on the desk and rested her chin on her palm, just staring at the screen; just staring at her and it made her heart flutter. Then the smile faded a bit and Taeyeon looked thoughtful. Tiffany tilted her head and gestured what was wrong, watching as the latter looked hesitant to answer her. She watched as Taeyeon pursed her lips for a moment before speaking again. *“What... um..,”* she started, suddenly looking nervous. *“What... are we?”*

‘What *are* we?’ Tiffany thought. That was a good question. She really liked Taeyeon and Taeyeon really liked her. She knew that, they knew that. They showed it openly but what were they? They hadn’t put a label on them since they clarified their mutual feelings a month ago. But was it needed, though? Did they need to name or label what they were having, Tiffany wondered, so she asked, “Must there be a label to us?”

Taeyeon sighed and Tiffany couldn’t understand why. *“I don’t know...but I think... I think I’d like it if we did. Like, it’d be... nice...for us to be something.”*

Tiffany raised her eyebrows and suppressed a smile. ‘Nice, huh. I guess it would be...nice,’ she thought because truthfully she didn’t mind if they didn’t label what they were but she didn’t deny the fact that it gave an odd sense of comfort to know what they were. “I guess so,” she replied. “What do you want us to be then?”

Taeyeon sighed and mumbled, *“More of what I want **you** to be...”* Tiffany frowned a little, something felt familiar about the situation. Taeyeon must’ve seen her frowning because she repeated what she said a little louder, her pinch-able cheeks turning pinkish.

“What *do* you want me to be?” she asked, even though she pretty caught on what Taeyeon was getting at as she suppressed the butterflies in her tummy and the excited beats of her heart.

Taeyeon blushed, moving her eyes to the camera, looking right into it and looking right at her. *“My... girlfriend... Please?”*

Tiffany stopped herself in time from jumping off her seat but couldn’t help with the warmth that had crept up to her cheeks. She grinned, finally realizing why it all felt familiar. Looking into her own camera when Taeyeon’s eyes had diverted away from the camera to the screen, she replied almost too happily, “Only if you’ll be mine too.”

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Tiffany stretched her weary body a little as she checked the digits on the paper in her hand with the ones in front of her. A smile made its way on her face as she took off her sunglasses and kept them in her handbag. She fixed her hair a little and pressed the bell. She shifted her weight between her feet, feeling a few emotions rushing in her; excitement, longing, nervousness. It made her heartbeat fasten at the sound of shuffling behind the door and she held her breath as a ‘click’ was heard before the door swung open, revealing the one person she had been yearning to meet for what felt like the longest time. The one she had wanted to protect from so many things but was unable to. The one who’s had her heart flutter at the sound of her voice and the one who made her heart skip a beat every time she smiled through their video calls. Kim Taeyeon, looking absolutely gorgeous with her brown hair in a messy ponytail, eyes wide in surprise and slight confusion, clad in a fitting tank top and loose grey sweat pants. Webcam had done no justice to how amazing she looked in person. Tiffany let Taeyeon stare at her in silence as she herself let her eyes study every feature she had grown to adore. It felt surreal; to have someone she had wanted so much to hold, stand right in front of her and just within reach.

“Tiffany...” It came out soft and unsure. Taeyeon’s widened eyes relaxed and her eyebrows furrowed instead. “Tiffany?”

Tiffany grinned, loving the sound of her voice in person. It wasn’t much different from their many calls but it certainly felt different. “Hi there.”

The next thing she knew, she was pulled down and forward slightly with arms tightly secured around her neck and another body against hers as her own arms instinctively went around the small waist.

“Hi..,” Taeyeon replied softly, snuggling against her neck. “It’s... good to see you.”

Tiffany let out a low chuckle, pulling the girl in her arms close; wanting them to be one if they could. She closed her eyes and ran her nose lightly along the length of Taeyeon’s neck before resting her lips lightly on the exposed skin at the base of her neck and took a deep breath. Taeyeon smelled so good, it made her dizzy. She smelled like something fruity and yet she smelled like something sort of breezy too, if that even made sense. Tiffany didn’t know, the jetlag must be kicking in, and she didn’t care either. She felt like time had frozen and all she could feel was Taeyeon’s warmth against her and the light breathing against her neck. It made her light-headed, it made her feel so many things that her heart pounded crazily in her chest and she wondered if Taeyeon could feel it too.

“It’s good to see you too, Taeyeon,” she whispered. She felt the latter tighten her hold around her neck, pulling her even closer and she knew that she wasn’t the only one who didn’t want to let go. Not yet, anyway.

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“Hey... Tiffany,” a warm gentle voice called out to her as she was shook lightly. A weight dipped the mattress slightly as someone sat down on it. “Tiffany, wake up.”

She groaned and turned to her side, away from the voice and pulled the blanket higher over her shoulders. She felt the mattress shift, a small weight on the side she was facing and something leaning slightly against the back of her hip. A whiff of an oddly comforting and familiar smell from the blanket invaded her senses. She sniffed the blanket curiously, still with her eyes closed and her eyebrows furrowed. It’s the same smell from her dream, a very nice dream. She smiled somewhat goofily and sniffed the blanket even more, burying her face in it.

A low chuckle was heard somewhere above her. “What are you doing?”

“She smells like this,” Tiffany mumbled with a small drunken smile and rubbing her face on the blanket, obviously not fully awake yet.

Another chuckle, it was louder this time. “Tiffany...,” the voice called out softly. Tiffany felt a small hand cup her cheek and a thumb caressing it. She leaned towards the touch, it made her feel warm inside, giddy, or maybe that was just because she was barely conscious. “Hey, come on. I don’t want you up all night later, you haven’t eaten either.”

‘Up all night? Why would I be up all night?’ she wondered. She turned to lie on her back, struggling to open her eyes and squinted against the light in the room. The first thing –or rather, person – she saw was Taeyeon sitting next to her, hovering over her with a hand supporting her weight on the other side

of Tiffany. Taeyeon was watching her with the most adorable amused expression as Tiffany blinked a few times, still disoriented and still feeling extremely exhausted. It took a while for Tiffany's brain to start up before it finally dawned on her and she grinned widely, causing Taeyeon to grin as well. "So, I did get on a plane then," she said drowsily.

Taeyeon's smile widened. "Unless you had other means of getting half way across the world, yes. Yes, you did. Did your jetlag get your mind in a mush?"

"Maybe," she replied, staring into the soft brown eyes. It still felt like she was dreaming. She really wanted to hold her, she so badly did. She scooted on the bed; causing Taeyeon to retract her hand from the mattress on Tiffany's other side. Turning on her side and she reached out to Taeyeon, beckoning the latter to lie in her arms. Tiffany watched as she hesitated for a while before complying. The moment Taeyeon was in her arms, Tiffany wrapped her arms around the girl, hugging her close like a bolster. She felt Taeyeon snuggle against her and an arm wrap around her own waist, clutching the fabric of the back of her shirt. She smiled. It felt so comfortable, so easy and so natural, like they've done that a million times and she wished she could hold her like that all the time.

"You haven't showered since you got off the plane," she heard Taeyeon murmur against her neck and she couldn't help but chuckle. Tiffany was about to reply when she continued. "But how is it that you smell so good?"

"Well, that's good. At least I don't smell horrifyingly bad so thank you," Tiffany replied, even though she was sure Taeyeon definitely smelled so much better than she could ever smell. An odd thing to think of, she realized. It sounded odd even in her head. She playfully countered the compliment, "You smell really *really* good too, you know?"

Taeyeon buried her face in the crook of her neck, probably embarrassed by the praise, and it made her heart race. Adorable, she thought. Too adorable; it made her feel like she should just keep her in her pocket and bring her home. Taeyeon mumbled something so softly that Tiffany wondered how she could have even heard it so clearly. "Why are you here? You didn't tell me you were coming..."

"You were so sad, I needed to come. I wanted to, so I did. You're lucky summer break just started, though, and that my parents allowed me to," she said, remembering how vulnerable and depressed Taeyeon sounded barely 2 weeks ago because things really started to take a toll on her; final year of college, future anxiety, loneliness and sadness of knowing in advance that she was going to be left alone since her dorm mate had to go home for the one month school break that was to come. To top it off like the icing on a cupcake, the feeling of being a burden to her aging father who was still busy working. Not to mention her exhausted brother who had graduated college and still trying to get a stable job while working temporarily at a mechanic shop. It got Tiffany so worried that it took her a

week to convince her parents, telling them she already had accommodation covered and that she had someone –a girl, her age- that she knew there too. She had given them the address of where she was staying, Taeyeon’s full name and contact number as well as compromising a whole lot of minor details. The rest of the time was taken to finish as much of her assignments as possible as well as plan her trip to Taeyeon’s apartment. She knew what Taeyeon would ask her next so she answered it beforehand.

“Since your break just started today and I can stay for the whole month, do you want me to?”

The answer didn’t come immediately and Tiffany waited patiently, resting her cheek on her head. “Yes please,” came a shy answer as the hand clutching the back of her shirt started to fiddle the hem of the cloth in a somewhat timid manner. ‘Way too adorable’, Tiffany thought. She shut her eyes close and took slow deep breaths until she heard Taeyeon speak again. “Your heart’s beating too fast,” she said, sounding concerned and it almost made Tiffany laugh out loud. Remarkable, how precious Taeyeon was. It was just undeniably, frustratingly, lovable.

Tiffany tightened her hold on Taeyeon and turned them, moving the latter to lie on top of her in one swift movement. She watched as the girl on top of her push herself up a little, evidently surprised and in the next moment, blushing furiously at how close their faces were to each other. Tiffany grinned and cupped the back of her neck, pulling her down towards her. With their lips barely touching, she stared into Taeyeon’s surprised eyes and whispered against her lips, “You made it that way.” She felt Taeyeon shudder slightly and her breath hitching before the latter closed her eyes and pressed their lips together herself.

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“Go to bed, you must be tired. It was a long flight,” Taeyeon said, her eyebrows furrowed. Ironical, to say the least, because Taeyeon was the one at the side of the world that was supposed to be asleep at that time.

Tiffany didn’t reply as she stared at the screen of her laptop, at the girl she missed so dearly after being apart for less than a day. She had taken more or less 13 hours just to get back to California and had just taken a long warm shower. It was noon at her place and she could feel the jetlag creep into her bones but all she could think about was the girl at the other side of the globe. Their separation was nothing dramatic or emotional. No tears were shed, no whining, nothing. Nothing but sad smiles and prolonged hugs. Truth be told, there were lingering kisses and clinging the night before but they had prepared way beforehand that they’d have to separate again once their month was up. She was glad they even got to meet and spend a month together – day and night –, and she knew Taeyeon felt the same way. They had

spent their time together like any other dating couples did but never went further than kissing and cuddling. Still, Tiffany had the best time there and she hoped it was the same for Taeyeon too. Both of them were mature enough to know it wasn't the end when their time was up and knew that they'd meet again. It didn't mean it was easy for Tiffany, leaving her, though. It was so hard that Tiffany almost wanted to just 'miss' her flight and postpone her departure for at least another day but she knew she couldn't bail on her family's short trip to her grandparents for the remaining of her summer break. *"Come on, baby,"* Taeyeon coaxed, giving a shy smile and Tiffany grinned. She loved it when Taeyeon called her 'baby'. The first time Taeyeon called her that was more of how she accidentally blurted it without much of a thought while trying to wake Tiffany up on one of the mornings she spent over in Seoul with her. It was sudden, abrupt, and Taeyeon got so shy afterwards but Tiffany had loved the sound of it. It made her heart flutter, turns her mind into mush and made her feel like special. She loved it so much and Taeyeon knew that even though she still got shy saying it. *"Sleep, please? You know how tired you are, I can see it."*

"I miss you," she replied, feeling a weight dragging her already worn out body down as she said it. Taeyeon gave her a soft smile in response, her eyes flickered between longing and affection, and Tiffany knew she missed her too. She wanted to tell Taeyeon that she loved her too but she felt like it wasn't time yet, for any of them to say it. Not yet, but Tiffany personally felt like she had long surpassed just merely 'liking' her the moment they kissed for the first time.

"Let's lie down okay?" she said, carrying her laptop to the bed. Tiffany did the same, moving her pillows around and placed the laptop on one side. She pulled her curtains closed to block out the sunlight and climbed onto the bed, on the empty side, sliding beneath her covers as the air-conditioner hummed softly. Resting on her side and her head comfortably on her pillow, she adjusted the screen so that she could still see Taeyeon and the latter could see her. Taeyeon had turned off her lights, leaving only the soft glow from the screen to light up her features. She looked serenely beautiful and Tiffany wanted so badly to be there with her again. *"Now sleep. You want me to sing for you?"*

Tiffany wordlessly nodded and so she sang. She sang as beautifully as she looked and Tiffany kept her eyes on her until she felt her eyes droop heavily. She blinked, trying to keep her eyes open and tried to stare at her longer but she failed miserably. She vaguely saw Taeyeon looking way too amused at her failed battle with her exhaustion. Giving up, she took a deep breath and let it out slowly, closing her eyes. She let herself succumb to the much needed rest as *her* voice eased her heart and warmed it with her melodies.

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Tiffany tossed and turned. She sighed and opened her eyes as her hands felt around the mattress by her pillow, trying to reach for her phone. As her fingertips touched the device, she grabbed it and clicked her unlock button. The bright light from the screen was temporarily blinding and she squinted, trying to look at the time. She sighed again; it was 3am in the morning. She slid her finger across her phone screen and clicked on small yellow application box that allowed free international calling and texting. Clicking again on her contacts list, her finger hovered hesitatingly over a familiar name. ‘Should I call her?’ she pondered. ‘Or would texting be better?’ A moment of hesitation and she decided to call.

Truth be told, she dreaded the call but she had missed the other person so much that she felt like she needed to hear her voice at least. Sitting up against the headboard of her bed, she brought her knees to her chest and placed her chin on it. With the phone against her ear, she heard the ringing continue as she waited for the call to be picked up. After a few rings, a soft ‘click’ was heard and she waited for a cold or even a harsh response. Instead, she was greeted by a gentle concerned voice.

“Hello? Tiffany?” called out the voice she had been longing to hear for almost two weeks. Tiffany hesitated again, not sure if she really wanted to talk anymore if it could lead to her getting heartbroken. In her hesitation, the other person on the line spoke again, *“Hello? Hey...what’s wrong? It’s late there, why aren’t you asleep?”*

She sighed. “I miss you...I’m sorry,” she said, remembering their last video call about 2 weeks ago. They were fighting because Tiffany was having an extremely long bad day and Taeyeon had been busy lately with something Tiffany wasn’t even sure of what. She felt like Taeyeon wasn’t putting much effort in the relationship and couldn’t help thinking that maybe Taeyeon didn’t want them to be together anymore. It had been more or less 5 months since her visit to Seoul and after summer break, Tiffany’s been stressed over her own school work while Taeyeon just hasn’t been talking to her much. She just couldn’t help but feel insecure because she thought that maybe Taeyeon had had enough and wanted to end things. Wasn’t that always how it went? When the other party seem to withdraw themselves away slowly, but surely? It ended up with a lot of words spoken, a very upset Taeyeon and a heartbroken Tiffany. They hadn’t video called or even voice called ever since and even their texts or chatting would result in short replies from Taeyeon. Tiffany hadn’t apologized though and Taeyeon hadn’t brought it up either. It made Tiffany scared, extremely scared that maybe that was it. Maybe Taeyeon had had it with her. Tiffany swallowed the growing lump she felt in her throat at that thought and spoke again, “I’m sorry for what I said...the other day.”

A chuckle. *"The other day was like...two weeks ago. But apology accepted. I'm sorry too. I'm just settling some stuff before graduation and yeah... I miss you too, you know."*

'No, I don't know,' Tiffany wanted to say but she didn't want them to get into another fight again. She felt relieved about Taeyeon putting their fight in the past but at the same time, she still felt insecure. She decided to try something. "I love you...", she said.

"Me too," Taeyeon replied casually and Tiffany sighed, feeling her eyes burning and her heart sinking. Taeyeon heard the sigh. *"Hey, what's wrong? That's not the only reason why you called, is it? Tell me what's wrong,"* Taeyeon asked and Tiffany could hear her concern but instead of making her feel better, it somehow made her feel worse.

"You've never said it back," she said sadly, closing her eyes as she felt them tearing up. *"What?"* A dry chuckle and she repeated herself. "You've never told me you loved me too."

"What? Yes, I do," Taeyeon said defensively. Tiffany took a deep breath and countered her statement, her voice shaking a little, "No, you don't. You'd say 'me too' or 'I do too' but never 'I love you too' and it makes me wonder, do you really?"

Taeyeon didn't seem to have anything to say to that and Tiffany let out another bitter chuckle. She sniffed and wiped the tears that had started to escape through her closed eyes. "You're gonna break up with me, aren't you?"

"What?! No!" Taeyeon exclaimed almost immediately before softening her voice, *"No, no. I'm not gonna break up with you..."* Her fast response made Tiffany feel slightly better. Just a tiny bit, but still, she felt better. She heard Taeyeon sigh before continuing, *"I do feel the same way as you. You should know that. I just... It's not the right time yet for me to say them like that. I don't know how to explain it to you but... let me settle what I have on my hands right now first and... and I'll try to make you understand where I'm coming from. Just... just let me finish what I'm doing first? Please? I'm not breaking up with you... You mean a lot to me, you have no idea how much..."*, the last words were spoken shyly and it made Tiffany smile a little. Tiffany sniffed again, her tears had stopped with Taeyeon's words. She wiped the remaining tears off her face, feeling much better. She didn't fully understand but if Taeyeon insisted that she felt the same way then Tiffany would trust that she did. *"Please don't cry? I'm sorry. I'll make it up to you when I'm done settling stuff here first okay? I promise,"* Taeyeon said, sounding sincerely apologetic.

"Okay," she replied softly. "I'll take your word for that; you making it up to me. I cried because of you." Tiffany was honestly feeling a lot better but she just felt like teasing Taeyeon a little bit.

"I know, I'm sorry," Taeyeon said timidly and it made Tiffany feel bad for teasing. *"I have a few more months before everything is completely settled but be patient with me please? I'll try to make time for*

you when I can.”

Tiffany wanted to ask what it was that was keeping Taeyeon so occupied but she felt like maybe she didn't need to know because it didn't seem to matter anymore. All that mattered was Taeyeon feeling the same way and they weren't breaking up. “Promise?” she asked, feeling embarrassed how weak and child-like she probably seemed like at the moment.

Taeyeon chuckled. *“Yeah, I promise. Sleep please? It's..., ”* a gasp before she continued, *“Tiffany, it's almost 4am, go to bed please. Now, please.”*

Tiffany grinned at the fact that even when Taeyeon's reprimanding her, she's always so polite and cute, and adorable, and... ‘Damn, I love her so much,’ she thought. “Okay, okay. I'll go now. I love you very much,” she said. She sensed hesitation on Taeyeon's side and decided to reassure her, “It's okay, you can say it like you always do.”

“Um... I do too, very very very veeeeerrrrry much,” Taeyeon replied softly, her emphasis obviously intended to convince Tiffany that she meant it but Tiffany knew that she did. Not by what she had said, but more of the sincerity in her voice that convinced her more than anything. *“I miss you. Goodnight... baby,”* Taeyeon continued, and Tiffany could picture her blushing slightly.

“I miss you too, cutie,” Tiffany countered, grinning widely as she heard a giggle from Taeyeon. “Bye.”

.....

“So, remember how I told you that I went home last weekend to meet my dad and my brother?” Taeyeon asked and Tiffany hummed as a response to tell her that she remembered.

Tiffany adjusted her phone wedged between her ear and shoulder as she sat on the floor by her bed and arranged her clothes neatly in the luggage. “What about it?” she asked when Taeyeon didn't continue.

“Taeyeon?”

“Well, um... how do I say this..., ” Tiffany heard her mumble before hearing a sigh. While waiting for Taeyeon to get on with whatever she wanted to say, Tiffany frowned as she studied the contents of her luggage. She took out a few things and rearranged the others, trying to make some space. As she was rearranging her things, she heard another sigh from Taeyeon before the latter continued, *“I'll just come out and say it then... I told them about us.”*

“I see,” Tiffany answered casually, still engaged in moving her things around before the message really sunk in. She gasped, dropping the blouse she was holding carelessly into the luggage. Tiffany held the phone with her hand instead. “You what?! What? How? Why?”

A sigh. *“I just thought it's time. I mean, your family already knows about us and all... and it's only fair*

that I tell mine... about...us,” Taeyeon mumbled. Tiffany frowned, leaning against the foot of her bed. “I mean... I’ve wanted to tell them for a while... and since my brother was there, I thought... I don’t know... but it’s done...”

Tiffany could hear the hurt in her voice and knew. “They didn’t take it too well, did they?” Honestly, she felt touched that Taeyeon told her family about them. It showed that Taeyeon was as serious about them as she was. Tiffany knew, though, the consequences that came along with it and couldn’t help but feel sorry about it, and guilty; like it was her fault.

“Well, my brother took it pretty well... I guess. At least he’s still talking to me and all. He told me that it’s okay and that I’m still his baby sister but Dad... well, let’s just say we got into an argument and he’s not talking to me nor do I want to talk to him at the moment,” Taeyeon replied, sounding so vulnerable that Tiffany wished she could be there with her and hold her. Something felt off though, like there was something more to what Taeyeon was letting on but Tiffany decided against asking more about it.

“I’m sorry,” Tiffany mumbled. “You really didn’t have to tell him, you know. We could’ve done it together some other day, if you wanted, at least. You didn’t have to tell him alone... I’m sorry.”

“What? Don’t be sorry, it’s not your fault and nah, it’s fine. He’ll get over it... It’s time he knew anyway and I wouldn’t want you to be there when all the yelling was going on,” Taeyeon replied, chuckling dryly. *“Plus like I said, it’s only fair, since your family knows about me too.”*

“That’s different and you know it. I told you my family already knew I went both ways since I was 17... it was just a matter of who,” Tiffany said, sighing. “Thank you, though... it means a lot to me.”

“You mean a lot to me, that’s why I did it.” Tiffany could imagine Taeyeon smiling on the other end and it made her smile too. *“Enough talk about that... are you done packing yet? When are you moving again? Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow?”*

“Tomorrow,” she replied, picking up the blouse she had thrown into the luggage and folding it neatly after wedging the phone back between her ear and shoulder again. “I can’t believe they let me move out before graduation... well, it’s a month before graduation but still. I wish you could see the apartment I’m moving into though, it’s perfect. Not too big, not too small. Just my own little space.”

Taeyeon chuckled. *“Maybe soon. Hey, remember to tell me your new address once you’ve gotten everything settled in. Oh and by the way, I’m almost done settling everything I have on my hands now. I’ll have more time for you.”*

“Really?” Tiffany grinned, zipping up her luggage and placing it next to the small pile of boxes and 2 other luggage by her closet.

“Really,” Taeyeon replied, laughing. *“And I have a surprise for you too but it might take some time.”*

Maybe in a month or two. I'm just telling you for fun, so you'd anticipate it." Tiffany could hear the playfulness in her voice.

"Jerk," Tiffany countered just as playfully. 'Damn, now I'm curious...' she thought. "Would I love the surprise?"

"I'd like to think so," Taeyeon mused, sounding a little nervous about it. *"If you don't... well, that would really suck, to be quite honest."*

"I'm sure I'll love it, though," Tiffany stated confidently, hoping to reassure Taeyeon. She'd like anything Taeyeon would do for her, though. Even if it was as little as replying her text no matter how busy she was to telling her family about them. 'I wish I could see you again...', she thought longingly as she heard Taeyeon reply and continued their conversation for another half an hour before she was forced to sleep.

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"Package for Miss Tiffany...Hwang?" questioned the post man standing in front of her, holding a clipboard and a small rectangular package in his hands. Tiffany nodded and stared at the package handed to her curiously before she was handed the clipboard along with a pen. "Please sign your name at the bottom, Miss."

After signing and thanking the man, she closed the door and plopped herself down on the couch of her month-old new apartment. An envelope fluttered to her lap as she tore the wrapping of the package open, revealing a rectangular black box. Crumpling the wrapping first, she picked up the envelope and opened it first as she placed the package on her lap instead. She saw the familiar handwriting in the letter inside the envelope and immediately smiled.

Hey baby, 847264, remember these digits okay?

Okay, wait, I think I'm confusing you right now. Let's backtrack a little. Firstly, I don't know if you've opened the package but I hope you like them. I told you I'd make it up to you so consider this... part 1? :) Secondly, if you've opened it, you might be wondering about the numbers I told you to memorize but I'm kinda lazy to explain all these right now so just call me once you've received this? No matter what time it is, just call me okay?

Hope you liked the gifts.

I miss you.

Tiffany grinned and rolled her eyes at the part where Taeyeon was too lazy to explain things to her by

writing. Exchanging the letter with the black box on her lap, she opened the lid. Inside, were two things, all individually wrapped with bubble wrap for extra protection; a small framed collage of pictures of both of them, taken from her trip to Seoul around a year ago along with a couple screenshots of their webcam sessions and - the one that surprised her most - a silver ring. Having studied the framed collage, she finally picked up the ring. It was plain, to be honest; just a plain silver ring with some engravings on both the inner and outer side of the ring. She brought the ring closer. On the outer side of the ring, engraved beautifully was; *Taeyeon* , while on the inner side, it read; *for as long as you'd have me*. It was a plain silver ring but Tiffany wouldn't have wanted it any other way. She loved it, it was simple and it was really the first time she had ever gotten a ring as a gift. She unconsciously blushed; no one had ever treated her so specially. She tried it on her right middle finger and found it to be too tight but it fitted snugly on her right ring finger instead. She smiled, loving how it looked on her hand.

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“Hello?” croaked a drowsy voice of the person she absolutely adored.

“Hey cutie,” Tiffany greeted. “Are you...sleeping? Isn’t it supposed to be 4pm there?” she asked, wondering why Taeyeon sounded like she had just woken up.

A soft chuckle and Tiffany smiled; she missed her. “No, it’s midnight and the jetlag hasn’t left me yet... how did you get through this?” Taeyeon replied, groaning, and Tiffany could picture her stretching. Tiffany grinned at the sound. “I see. Well, I—,” her words stopped abruptly and she frowned. “Wait. What jetlag?” she asked, her eyes staring at the digital clock on her bedside table. ‘It’s midnight here... she’s... where is she?’

Another chuckle but instead of answering, Taeyeon asked her another question. “Did you just get the package?”

“No, got it this morning. I just thought I’d call you when it’s supposed to be day time where you are....,” she trailed off, her thoughts whirling but she didn’t know if it was safe to assume what she thought was happening. “Where... are you?”

“...Where you are,” Taeyeon replied simply and Tiffany could imagine her smiling. “Well, kind of. The letter I gave you, did you flip it over?”

Tiffany scrambled off her bed, almost stumbling, and Taeyeon must’ve heard her because she heard her giggling. She hastily switched the room light back on and grabbed the letter from her dressing table. Turning it over, she read the writing she failed to notice earlier and gasped loudly.

An address of an apartment was scribbled.

It was in Los Angeles, California, and approximately 15 minutes away from her own apartment by foot. “*Surprise?*” Taeyeon said, chuckling, and Tiffany couldn’t stop the grin from appearing on her face.

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Tiffany hastily punched the numbers in and heard a click. She opened the door open and stumbled in, feeling slightly woozy from the lack of sleep. Actually, ‘lack of sleep’ would be an understatement. She didn’t sleep a wink, counting every millisecond to sunrise since Taeyeon had forbidden her from dashing out her door at midnight to meet her. It was currently 7am in the morning and she hurriedly, and noisily, closed the door behind her. She heard noise from within the house and rushed into the apartment.

Surprisingly, in the kitchen, cracking a few eggs in a bowl and looking very much awake, stood the petite little girl that had caused her a sleepless night. Without hesitation, she launched herself onto the distracted girl, startling the latter.

“Dear good eggs, you scared me,” she heard Taeyeon exclaim before her hug was reciprocated warmly. Tiffany chuckled happily. She pulled back and held Taeyeon by her arms, studying every feature intently with a grin on her face. Taeyeon looked healthy, which was good, and very much amused with how she was acting. She brushed Taeyeon’s fringe away, letting her hand linger on her face before cupping the latter’s cheeks. Tiffany sighed contently, a small smile still on her face. “So tell me.” Taeyeon grinned, leaning against her touch. “There was something I’ve never told you,” she started to explain, as she promised she would. “The reason why I was set on speaking on English all the time, wasn’t only due to your horrendous Korean,” she continued, ignoring Tiffany’s look of disbelief, “It was so that I could practice English and be fluent enough to move to Vancouver, Canada because after my mom left, I saw no reason to stay in Korea. Everything there reminded me of how she didn’t want us so I wanted to move. I didn’t even tell my brother or my dad about this... I wanted to see if I could actually do it.”

Taeyeon grabbed the hand cupping her face and pulled her towards the couch. “Vancouver?” Tiffany asked, she still wasn’t getting why Taeyeon was in California. If anything, she was even more confused. “Yeah. I don’t know,” Taeyeon chuckled. “I just wanted to move somewhere and the television was showing a documentary on Canada, and yeah. I just chose it randomly as a starting point...,” she paused again, letting Tiffany sit as close as possible to her, playing with her hand. “Then I met you though, and one thing led to another... so I thought, ‘hey maybe California could work too’.

I didn't decide yet, because I didn't know how we'd work out... but you came to Seoul that day, and I started planning everything that was to be set in motion the moment you left. Blah blah blah, here I am," Taeyeon said happily, but something flickered briefly in her eyes and Tiffany had caught it, somehow.

"Your dad..." Tiffany started carefully; unsure if what she thought was happening was right. Taeyeon's smile faltered and she knew she was. Tiffany sighed, feeling guilty. "He thinks I'm the reason you want to leave Korea completely, doesn't he?"

Taeyeon looked down dejectedly at their intertwined hands. "It doesn't matter," she replied. "He's just finding blame in random things to avoid the fact that I'm basically a disappointment because I'm not dating a man."

Tiffany sighed. "I'm sorry," she said. Taeyeon shook her head but said nothing more. "Do you want me to talk to him?" Tiffany asked, watching Taeyeon carefully. It obviously affected the girl more than she lets on.

Taeyeon shook her head again. She looked up and Tiffany saw a huge smile on her face, in attempt to hide the pain inside. "Well, he just needs to get over it because..." Taeyeon paused, her cheeks turning pink and her voice softened, "I love you."

Tiffany blushed, probably one of the rarest times that she would, and she could see Taeyeon was feeling victorious about it. "Um, I-I love you too," she said, mentally berating herself as she saw Taeyeon's grin widen and that little chin dimple deepen.

"Sounds better in real life, doesn't it?" Taeyeon asked the pinkness in her cheeks still present.

Tiffany grinned and leaned towards her, gazing into the shy girl's gentle brown eyes. "Say it again please."

"I love you," Taeyeon repeated. She would've sounded confident if it wasn't for the fact that she was blushing furiously at the sudden action from Tiffany.

Tiffany felt her words on her lips, sending pleasant tingles all the way down her spine and she could hear her heart race. "Yeah..." Tiffany replied softly, closing the gap between them. "Yeah, it sounds amazing."

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Tiffany had barely managed to stop the door from slamming in her face as she followed a fuming Taeyeon into the latter's humble apartment. Tiffany closed the door quietly and entered the living room, leaving her bag on the kitchen counter. She watched Taeyeon pace – or rather stomp – angrily around

the room. She had never seen Taeyeon that angry or upset before and it was pretty unsettling. It felt like watching a volcano ready to erupt while standing at the edge of the crater. In the few months Taeyeon had moved to California, Tiffany had managed to learn more about the girl that she had failed to notice during her month stay in Seoul. Things like how Taeyeon takes less than half an hour to get ready, or how she's also very particular on cleanliness, or even to how her jaw slackens and her mouth hangs open slightly when she's engrossed in watching something. They've had a few small arguments before and Tiffany knew there were exactly 3 usual stages that Taeyeon goes through. Tiffany suspects a 4th stage but she hadn't seen it before and she was glad for it, but right now, she had a bad feeling she was about to and she wasn't sure if she was prepared for it.

Currently, stage 1 was on-going where Taeyeon would pace around, trying to calm herself. If she successfully does so, she would slow down, look away and take slow deep breaths before letting out a heavy sigh. If not, she'd turn and face Tiffany, frowning. Tiffany found upset Taeyeon kind of sexy with furrowed eyebrows, focused eyes and flexed jaw but she doubted Taeyeon would find humor in that, especially if she were to bring it up when Taeyeon was fuming. This time, though, the pacing didn't go for long before Taeyeon turned and faced Tiffany. Stage 2 was commenced; the confrontation. Tiffany gulped and approached her slowly; she knew she was wrong despite her good intentions.

"Why did you do that?" Taeyeon asked and Tiffany could hear the strain in her voice to keep herself calm. "You know you really shouldn't have done that, so why?"

Tiffany sighed when she stopped an arm's length away from Taeyeon. Distance helped a little because Taeyeon did not like being touched or having her personal bubble invaded when she's angry; another thing Tiffany had learned, the hard way, unfortunately. "I just wanted to help," she tried to reason, her voice clear and steady despite feeling afraid of the consequences of what she did. Tiffany wasn't going to back down yet. Taeyeon needed to know that she meant well and it hurt to feel like she wasn't important enough to help in this situation.

"I don't need your help," Taeyeon replied coldly through her clenched teeth. She folded her arms; Tiffany noted, and knew they had stepped into Stage 3, the part when Taeyeon starts to be defensive. Folding her arms created an unconscious barrier between them and served as a defence shield to what she had to say. Regrettably, Taeyeon's going through her stages quicker than usual. "There's nothing to fix, Tiffany," she continued, scowling. Her voice was raised slightly, "There's nothing to fix at all. Nothing's broken!"

Tiffany sighed, running her fingers through her hair. "You know that's not true. He's your dad, Taeyeon. He's trying to reconcile so why won't you just talk to him?" she asked, honestly not

understanding why Taeyeon was being so prideful and stubborn about fixing her relationship with her father, who was trying to reach back out to her. Taeyeon refused to talk about it with her and Tiffany just couldn't understand why. "He's been calling you, I know he has. Since you wouldn't talk to him, then I thought I would —."

"Why won't you just back off?! It's none of your business, okay?!" Taeyeon yelled, causing Tiffany to flinch and unconsciously take a step back. "This is **not** your problem, Tiffany, so just leave it!"

That was it. Breaking point; Stage 4, and it scared Tiffany to finally see it. It hurt, a lot. She didn't know whether if it was because of Taeyeon's words or the way she had said it – more like, yelling it –, or it could be the combination of both, but she felt her heart breaking in a way it had never did before and suddenly, she wasn't feeling too good about herself, at all. It was like she wasn't enough; not important enough. She didn't know what to say so she just looked sadly at Taeyeon as she felt her heart sink all the way to her feet while the latter irritably looked away, glaring at the wall. A heavy silence engulfed them before Taeyeon let out a frustrated groan and stomped into her room, muttering incoherent things in Korean and slamming the door shut.

Tiffany sighed. She walked to the couch and sat down, leaning back. 'Maybe it wasn't a good idea to answer the call without her permission, Tiffany,' she thought bitterly to herself, feeling the dread weigh down her whole body. 'She's so upset now... Good job, Tiff.'

Her rambling thoughts were adding to her guilt and it broke her heart a little more with every second that passed as she sat alone in the living room. She felt worse every time her eyes darted to the closed door to Taeyeon's bedroom. She wondered if it was better for her to leave. She was supposed to stay the night before she did the brilliant thing of answering Taeyeon's dad's call while Taeyeon was in the restroom, and got caught doing so. She had been sitting alone in the living room for over half an hour, with only her babbling thoughts for company, and it was almost midnight but doubting that she should stay with Taeyeon being that upset with her, she stood up from the couch and grabbed her bag from the kitchen counter. Before she could walk to the door, the bedroom door opened and Taeyeon came out with her hair slightly damp, a huge oversized pajama top that came half-way down her thighs and her green shorts peeking out from under it. Furrowed eyebrows and a small pout; Taeyeon was obviously sulking and probably still upset but considerably calmer. Tiffany watched in amusement and held back a smile as her adorable girlfriend approached her, grabbed her wrist gently and pulled her into the bedroom, causing her to leave her bag back on the kitchen counter. All while avoiding eye contact. Once in the bedroom, her wrist was released by Taeyeon as the girl waved her away to the direction of the bathroom. Tiffany complied, turning her back to Taeyeon and hiding her smile. She closed the bathroom door and noticed that Taeyeon had left her a pair of white shorts and an oversized shirt along

with a towel for her. Her heart swelled gratefully and she did nothing to stop the grin from appearing on her face.

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She came out of the bathroom almost 20 minutes later, hair damp and clad in the clothes Taeyeon had provided, only to find that the room light had been switched off. The only source of light was the bedside lamp and Tiffany could see her girlfriend curled up under the blanket, facing her currently empty side of the bed. She smiled, thinking about how she just absolutely, hopelessly, would do anything for Taeyeon. Her smile turned sad when she remembered Taeyeon's outburst. If the latter wished Tiffany not to meddle into her business, then Tiffany wouldn't. She would respect that, even if it made her feel insignificant. She would respect that because all of Taeyeon's wishes, Tiffany wanted to grant them.

Tiffany switched off the bedside lamp and lied on the bed, facing Taeyeon. Her eyes adjusted to the dark room just as she felt Taeyeon scooting closer; the latter's arm snaking around her waist, hand clutching the back of her shirt and snuggling her head under Tiffany's chin.

"What took you so long?" Taeyeon grumbled, borderline whining, as Tiffany shifted to adjust their position; letting her arm act as a pillow for Taeyeon and her free arm hugging the latter close.

"You took just as long too," she countered. She chuckled when she heard Taeyeon grumble a little under her breath in what sounded like Korean again. She always wondered what Taeyeon says when she grumbles incoherently in Korean like that but she never asked, mostly coming to the conclusion that she probably wouldn't find it that cute anymore if she knew. "Sorry," she said shortly, not really wanting to go in depth on what she was apologizing for. "I won't do it again."

Taeyeon didn't reply and merely snuggled more against her. She took that as a 'You're forgiven.' She stared into the darkness, her thoughts swimming in her head. She didn't know how long she was lost in her own thoughts, probably a few minutes because Taeyeon's breathing had slowed and she had assumed her to be asleep.

That was until Taeyeon spoke up again. "I'll call him tomorrow," she said softly, almost as if she was talking more to herself more than to Tiffany.

Tiffany stayed silent, not knowing if she was even supposed to say anything back. Instead, she rubbed Taeyeon's back slowly, hoping to lull the girl to sleep as her own eyelids started to droop. They could talk about it after a good night's sleep.

Just when she thought Taeyeon had fallen asleep, the girl spoke up yet again. This time, Tiffany was

sure Taeyeon was barely awake. “Tiffany?” her girlfriend mumbled.

“Hmm?” she hummed lazily, her hands still rubbing Taeyeon’s back gently. Sometimes, Tiffany honestly felt like she’s taking care of a big baby but oddly, she found every child-like feature of Taeyeon extremely endearing. She had never found a need to complain, knowing just how much she means to Taeyeon too. Well, it’s hard not to acknowledge it when the girl’s practically the sweetest person she had ever met.

“I didn’t mean what I said,” Taeyeon said; her words slurring a little, coated with sleep. “You can mind my business all day... poke your butt in my life all you want...I don’t mind...butt my life....”

Tiffany chuckled drowsily. With that, Tiffany was sure Taeyeon was barely conscious and was starting to say things in a weird manner. She hummed a reply again, giving the girl in her hold a kiss on the head. A moment of silence and Tiffany started to drift in and out of consciousness. Her hand had stopped its lulling movements to Taeyeon’s back.

Taeyeon spoke again, her voice barely a whisper and her pronunciation just hopeless. “I... yuve yew....”

“I love you too,” Tiffany managed to reply, a goofy smile making its way on her face briefly before she felt herself slip back out of consciousness.

Three years,

5956 miles,

16 hours,

To none.

I’d do anything for you.



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