

STEALING CINDERELLA

HOW I BECAME AN
INTERNATIONAL FUGITIVE FOR LOVE

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PREVIEW 5

“Mark?” Leo whispered. “I hope that’s you standing there.”

“Yeah, it’s me,” I whispered back. “I figured it’d be best to leave the light off. I don’t want them coming up here.”

“I had the same thought.”

“Might as well have a beer,” I said. “Doesn’t seem like they’re going to knock this shit off any time soon. Want one?”

“Sure.”

Korean Lurch had moved Leo and me into our new apartment from the *yogwan* on Saturday afternoon. Now it was sometime around two-thirty Sunday morning, and the two of us were still awake, thanks to our battling landlords.

“There’s only one liter left,” I said. “I hope they wrap this thing up before we’re out.”

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“There’s always Sac-Sac,” Leo said. Sac-Sac was a juice-like product that came in tiny cans sealed with pull-off aluminum-foil stickers. It had traces of what might have been tangerine pulp floating in a liquid that was sort of like Tang, or flat orange soda. Leo had been consuming multiple cans per day, in the belief that it was healthy.

There was enough light coming in from a nearby street-light that I was able to find the beer bottle in the mini fridge, pop the top, and pour it into two of the little juice glasses Koreans used for beer.

“Hit the heights,” I whispered, handing him one of the glasses. This beer, called Hite, was allegedly made with spring water instead of whatever it was that gurgled from the tap.

There was no way to sleep, not when we were this close to the domestic death match going on downstairs between the husband and wife who owned the duplex. The battle had degenerated to sounds of breaking glass and heavy things tipping over an hour ago, and now they had spilled out into the garden, shouting and gesturing at each other. Leo and I stood at the bay window, watching.

“We need popcorn,” I whispered.

“And subtitles,” he said.

“Woman! Why you so damned gruesome!” I said. Switching to a higher-toned whisper, I answered myself: “Because I married a big pussy who can’t even slug me in the face right!”

The houses in this part of the city were all small, two-story structures, each surrounded by a concrete wall that included enough space to park a single car. Our landlords parked in the street, leaving the space empty, perhaps so they’d have room to do this.

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“I’m not even over jetlag, yet,” I said. “How often do you think this happens?”

The woman’s voice rose again into shouts. Illuminated by bright light coming through their windows, she raised her fist above her head and slammed it down into his face several times.

“Ooh! Shit!” Leo whispered.

The man reeled backward, waving his arms as if he were shaking out a bedsheet. He lurched forward and tried to kick her in the stomach, but missed. Her fist rose and beat him in the head and face again, with the same potato-mashing move. He raised his hands, shielding his head, and then seized a handful of her hair above her forehead and flung her to the ground. She landed face-first, but was up again in no time, clawing at his eyes.

“I wish we had more beer,” I said.

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