

# STEALING CINDERELLA

HOW I BECAME AN  
INTERNATIONAL FUGITIVE FOR LOVE

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PREVIEW 7

Leo and I were the second and third people at the bus stop. Lately we'd been taking taxis to work, but on rainy days they became scarce. We'd both already been passed many times by taxis that picked up Koreans instead of us.

"Aren't you glad I thought to buy umbrellas?" he asked.

"Yes, yes," I said. "Very forward-thinking of you." We stood back from the other person there, an *ajuma* holding an umbrella with a navy and gray spotted pattern that clashed with the two plaids of the ones we'd bought at the open market, even though they all shared the same flat colors.

"It doesn't stink as much when it rains," Leo said. "You know that smell that's always around? A class told me it's because the economy grew so fast, there was no time to improve the sewer system to match development. They got modern buildings but the streets smell like shit all the time."

## STEALING CINDERELLA

A man approached from one side, and another came from around the corner, both in suits. A younger woman walked up next, wearing some uniform from a bank or convenience store. Soon there were more than twenty Koreans waiting for the bus.

One man began shouting at me as he approached, pushing his way through the crowd and tilting his umbrella behind his back in order to lean under mine. He was middle-aged, wearing what might have been a shop foreman uniform, consisting of a brown shirt and brown pants. He continued shouting, now inches from my face. He smelled like garlic.

“Leo?” I said. “Do you have any idea what this is about?”

“Nope. Glad it’s you and not me, though.”

The man pushed me out of the way and began to yell at Leo. Someone next to me spoke English.

“He say America NAFTA plan bad for Korea. NAFTA cheat Korea!” This translator had glasses and was wearing a suit. He, too, was shouting.

The green and white bus arrived, and the crowd got on. Leo and I waited for the next one.

The new crowd that formed around us didn’t say anything, though they all stared. None of them ventured too close. They left a wide gap around us, as if they feared we might infect them with something.

When we boarded the next bus, there were no seats. Leo and I rode standing up, halfway down the aisle. We were once again the center of attention. “It’s like theater in the round,” Leo said.

It would be the last time either of us took a city bus in Taegu.

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