

# STEALING CINDERELLA

HOW I BECAME AN  
INTERNATIONAL FUGITIVE FOR LOVE

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PREVIEW 10

Major Byun was a married, middle-aged 103 who told me he attended SNM Academy in order to meet young women. He and I had agreed to get together downtown. I had come to Korea to network and look for opportunities, and pretty much anything beat sitting on the vinyl sectional watching AFKN, so I tended to accept every invitation I got.

It was Saturday so I wore jeans and a tee shirt. He was a major in the Korean Air Force, and he dressed like Major Nelson from *I Dream of Jeannie*. We went to see the movie *Cliffhanger*, in what must have been some sort of unlicensed or pirated showing. The “theater” was an old store filled with rows of folding chairs. Two-thirds of the seats were empty, but Major Byun chose to sit down next to a woman who seemed to be there alone. He offered her his popcorn and she refused. For the first ten minutes of the movie, he continued to push the popcorn at her, and she continued to refuse. Then she got up and moved away.

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After the show, I drank soju with him in a tent made from rubbery orange material like the stuff used for carnival bouncy-houses. He was older than me, so by Korean custom I had to down shot after shot as he poured for me and I reciprocated, pouring for him as he reminded me to show respect by holding the bottle with both hands.

“Soju is maybe too strong for Americans,” he said once when I shuddered. Soju was only half the strength of vodka, which I drank like water back in the States. The shudder had come from the realization, as I had tilted back the glass, that the stuff smelled like urinal cakes.

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