

## Chapter Fourteen

### Uninvited Visitors

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Dread was the only word to describe the feeling Gillian felt on the way to Margaret's house. Ever since she moved into the dorms, she hadn't had the chance to visit her aunt. It wasn't that she disliked the idea of seeing her aunt. Gillian just knew that Margaret would make a dramatic ordeal over what happened at the lake. As if the accident wasn't already embarrassing enough.

Not that she didn't appreciate the concern, but to have her aunt bawl over something like that was an additional headache Gillian didn't need.

"Your stop, miss," the cabman up front announced as the car roared to a stop.

After she paid her fare, Gillian headed toward the white house situated at the corner of the street. It was an old house, probably twice her aunt's age even, but the renovation it went through last year certainly gave it the polish it needed.

Stepping onto the porch, Gillian rang the doorbell with renewed enthusiasm.

"Gillian, dear!" Within seconds, Margaret flung the door open. "Come in, come in. I've been waiting."

"Sorry, if I'm late," said Gillian, peeling off her sneakers. "I know I was supposed to drop by yesterday, but you know, I had a lot of work to catch up on."

"It's fine, dear," Margaret replied, shutting the door. "I actually had company yesterday, so it wasn't entirely disappointing."

Gillian's curiosity was piqued. As far as she was concerned, Margaret was the type that didn't like to have company over her house. It was too much of an invasion of privacy, she'd said. "Who?"

The older lady chuckled. "People you know."

Without so much as another word, Margaret disappeared upstairs, leaving Gillian hanging in confusion at her vague answer. Seconds later, she could hear Margaret banging on the bedroom doors with a baseball bat. "People, people. Time to rise!!!"

Gillian could only stand there, wondering who they could be.

After several attempts, said people finally rose from their slumber. Footsteps could be heard as one of them emerged from the hallways and descended the stairs. “Why on Earth are you making us wake up so early for...” one of the two girls yawned. Gillian noted that she was wearing purple short shorts, and an oversized t-shirt.

It only took them a moment before recognition lit their eyes.

“Oh my gosh. Gillian, you little bitch, is that you?” the girl immediately hopped down the stairs and bounced over to Gillian, giving her a look before she flung herself at Gillian with an unmistakable eagerness.

“Hye Kyo, calm down, you'll hurt Gillian!” Margaret reprimanded. “She's still sick...”

Gillian rolled her eyes. “I'm not sick, Margaret. I just fell in the water.”

“You nearly drowned, dear.”

The girl with short shorts released Gillian. “What the hell is wrong with you? You still can't swim?”

“Yeah, yeah.” Gillian remembered the days Hye Kyo used to tease her in swimming class and couldn't help but roll her eyes again. “You're probably still the better swimmer. Happy?”

“Oh shut up!” Hye Kyo laughed, but it was obvious that she liked the compliment. “You've gotten prettier, too, Gillian! I'm fucking jealous.”

There were some things that never changed about her old friend. Hye Kyo did not have the best of manners or the most eloquent dictionary, but she definitely stood out with her charisma and appearance. Standing at five foot four, Hye Kyo had the proportioned curvaceous body that had many boys lusting after her in high school. However, her best assets were probably those striking almond eyes that made you think you were staring into a doll. Pretty, alluring, but impenetrable.

“Not as pretty as you,” Gillian smiled back.

“How about me?” the second girl could be seen dawdling down the stairways, stretching as she went.

“You're freaking un-gorgeous, Ariel,” Hye Kyo stuck her tongue out and said.

“Bitch!” Ariel shot. “I'm cute.”

“Girls, girls, don't start fights now. Gillian is still recovering from her sickness,” Margaret intervened in a motherly tone, chiding the two.

“For the last time, I'm not sick!”

“Why is she sick?” Ariel asked, not knowing the story.

“Oh. She almost drowned in the lake,” was Margaret's prompt reply.

Gillian sighed and decided to head into the kitchen to grab some refreshments. As much as she missed her high school friends, she wasn't exactly pleased to have them over here. She still had family businesses to take care of, and her friends weren't going to be such a great distraction. The last thing she needed was them to interfere with her plans.

“So, why so quiet, huh?” Hye Kyo sneaked in the kitchen and approached Gillian from behind. Being the highly instinctual bee she was, Hye Kyo was always alert and could instantly detect something fishy. “Your fucking awesome friends are here, and yet not a sign of excitement on your pretty face. Rude much? Spill honey, please.”

Gillian sighed, not at all in the mood for Hye Kyo's interrogation. “What are you talking about? I'm glad to see you guys. It's just...”

“What, did you get to meet your bastard of dad yet? Or your long-lost brother?” Hye Kyo perked up her well-done eyebrows. “Hmm, judging from your gloomy face, I guess they haven't accepted you, huh?”

“It's none of your business, okay?” Patience was not something Gillian had much of lately. “Just stay out of it.”

“Whoa,” Hye Kyo, suddenly defensive, pulled on a grouchy face. “What the fuck is your problem? I was just being curious, okay? It's not like I'm planning to intrude into your family life. But speaking of your god damn brother, is he a hottie?”

Even at times like that, Hye Kyo still had the mood to yap about boys. “Um, what happened to your Italian boyfriend?” Gillian asked, remembering the last time she heard Hye Kyo swooning over her new boyfriend.

“Oh, we broke up. He was such a lame-ass,” declared Hye Kyo. “I can do better.”

“Uh, okay,” Gillian shrugged.

“Hello?” Hye Kyo probed. “I asked you a question, honey.”

“What the fuck is my problem?” Gillian quoted.

“No, your god damn brother.”

“He's good-looking, I guess,” Gillian replied, remembering Daniel's face. “His name is Daniel, so stop saying that. And he is my brother, so don't have any ideas!” As far as she was concerned, Hye Kyo didn't exactly have a good reputation with handling people's hearts.

“Ok.” Hye Kyo hopped over to the coffee-maker machine and began preparing her a cup. But in that little action, her hair swayed to the side, almost in slow motion, as if to over-exaggerate the swiftness of her move. “Just wondering, sheesh. I'm not out to get him or anything.”

“Sure,” said Gillian in a nonchalant tone. “I remember John, in high school, that shy geeky boy? He was heads-over-heels with you, and you didn't even appreciate it. You just hop on to the next good thing you see.”

“What, well, he was too nice, you know? I can't help that he was in love with me. And it's not my fault I didn't feel the same. I just happen to have better standards on men.”

“Snob.”

“And damn proud.”

“Who's damn proud?” Ariel's voice cut through the air. The small, dark-haired girl came strolling inside, stretching as she went. “Hye Kyo? No, she's just a bitch.”

“Watch your words, Ariel,” Hye Kyo sang. “Don't think that just because we're friends since kindergarten, doesn't mean I won't yank that dark hair of yours.”

“Try me.”

Hye Kyo suddenly laughed. “Just kidding!” Although, Hye Kyo had the physical advantage over the tiny Ariel, she couldn't last a minute in a battle as Ariel was known as a tomboy that could beat up a person twice her size if she wanted to. She could make anyone cry out of his pants with her fierce, unyielding attitude. “Stop being such a man. Soften up, and maybe you'll attract a guy, okay?”

“No, thanks. I don't need guys to define my value.”

“What's that supposed to mean?” Hye Kyo threw her hands on her hips. Although, she looked angry, the truth was she could care less about what the implication meant.

“Oh, you know,” Ariel shrugged. “I'm pretty independent.”

Before Hye Kyo could lash out a reply, Margaret came strolling in with an announcement. “Does anyone know the young lad outside? He keeps ringing my doorbell.”

“Why don't you open?” Ariel asked.

“I did. I think he's looking for you, Gillian.”

Gillian's mind spun for a second. Who would be looking for her at her aunt's house? As far as she was concerned, she hadn't disclosed any information about her background to anyone here. Curious and somewhat concerned, Gillian headed out to meet the guest.

To her surprise, the sight of Daniel standing on the porch greeted her. In his hold was a basket of fruits.

“Daniel?” Gillian approached him. “What are you doing here?”

“Hey,” Daniel's smile widened upon hearing her voice. It was like an instant reaction whenever he saw her. “I'm here to visit! Was that your aunt?”

Gillian nodded. “How did you know?”

“Oh, just took a guess. I'm here to see you as well as her.”

“You didn't need to--” Before Gillian could even say anything, Daniel invited himself inside and beamed at Margaret, not forgetting to bestow her the fruits basket as a token of politeness. “I'm sorry I didn't recognize earlier. Well, my name is Daniel, and I am Gillian's boyfriend. I'm here for the very purpose of meeting you, auntie.”

'Oh, fuck,' was the only thing that ran through Gillian's mind the very moment he mentioned that wretched word. It seemed like Daniel couldn't get the notion out of his head ever since what happened at the lake. He deemed everything was going well when in truth, Gillian had no intention of being his so-called girlfriend. Oh, how the idea brought shivers down her spine.

Margaret could only stare in confusion. Ariel watched indifferently while Hye Kyo was trying to speculate what was going on.

Daniel sensed the cloud of confusion. “Uh, I'm sorry for not making it clear. Well, no I'm not officially her boyfriend. I'm just very confident that we would someday be an item.”

Margaret beamed, somewhat impressed by the young gentleman's optimism and enthusiasm. “Gillian, dear. Now why did I not hear about this young lad?”

Well, if Margaret knew, she would certainly disprove of Gillian's plans. “Uh...” Gillian fumbled for the right words to say.

“Oh, I guess she's just shy,” Daniel filled in for her, seeing that Gillian was trapped in awkwardness. “I hope you don't mind my abrupt visit. I just heard Gillian was visiting you and thought it wouldn't be such a bad idea to drop by as well because I want to pick her up for something afterwards.”

“Come in, come in,” Margaret smiled widely and invited Daniel into the living room. “Let's talk. I would like to get to know you a bit more.”

So the two strolled into the living room, leaving Gillian, Hye Kyo, and Ariel to stare at each other in stupor.

Hye Kyo's expression was full of questions. “What the fuck?”

Ariel scratched her head. “This is weird. I don't get what's going on.”

Hye Kyo grabbed Gillian by the shoulder and ushered her over to the corner. "Didn't you say that Daniel is your brother? Who is this boyfriend? What the fuck? You're going out with your brother?!"

"Who's going out with whose brother?" Ariel chipped in, curious. Apparently, she was the less knowledgeable one on Gillian's problem.

"Look, it's a long story--" Gillian attempted to explain but she could feel she was drowning in her friends' interrogating looks. "Oh god. I'll just explain later okay?"

"No, spill now!" Hye Kyo demanded, curiosity at its peak. "This is like, so unbelievable!"

"And I'm super confused. Since when did you have a brother?" Ariel asked.

Seeing that there was no option, Gillian slowly filled in some of the missing details. She tried explaining bits about Daniel's adoration for her was because he did not know that she was his sister. She also briefed on the reason why things sped out of control and how she was thinking of clearing matters up as soon as she could find the answers she was seeking for.

Hye Kyo and Ariel could only gape in speechlessness as Gillian outlined everything for them. Both of them almost thought that this sounded too pretentious to be true, but Gillian wasn't exactly the drama queen that would be making stories up just to create a storm.

In no time, Daniel interrupted them. "Hey."

"Hi there," Ariel said, not knowing what to think of the dude in Gillian's story.

Hye Kyo decided to clear the tension. "Oy! Your name's Daniel, right? I'm Hye Kyo, your girlfriend's trusted best friend and advisor, so you better watch out. Just a friendly warning!" At this, she laughed her girly laugh.

"Oh... well nice to meet you, Hye Kyo, and..."

"Ariel," Ariel filled in.

"And Ariel," said Daniel with a polite smile. Then he looked over to Gillian. "So, ready?"

“Where are you guys heading to?” Hye Kyo asked.

“To the great city mall. I hear there's a show tonight,” supplied Daniel. “The band we're going to see hardly tours here. So it's a once-in-a-lifetime chance!”

“Great! Can we come?” Hye Kyo raised her enthusiastic voice two notches, which earned her an incredulous look from Ariel.

Gillian decided that it would be a good idea, since she did not fancy the idea of a romantic night with Daniel. “I don't see why not. The more, the merrier, right?” She looked at Daniel, trying to ask for his approval.

Daniel gazed awkwardly at the girls. He hadn't planned for a group outing but seeing Gillian's eagerness, he couldn't stand to say no. “I guess...”

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“Why the hell did you want to tag along for?” Ariel questioned with barefaced annoyance as she and Hye Kyo trailed behind Daniel and Gillian into the mall. Sometimes, Hye Kyo's actions were far too childish for Ariel to understand, so she preferred to ask directly than plunge in speculations.

Hye Kyo snorted, as though not believing Ariel's denseness sometimes. “Didn't you hear? They're siblings! How could I let them be by themselves?”

“Doesn't mean you have to interfere.”

“I'm not interfering, Ariel. I'm trying to help Gillian out, okay?” Hye Kyo justified in a deeply righteous tone. “In fact, she should be thanking me for coming to her rescue. I'm sure she didn't want this to happen.”

“Really? Or are you carrying ulterior motives?”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Don't lie. I see it in your eyes,” Ariel declared. “Your lustrous eyes.”



Hye Kyo wanted to laugh, knowing what her friend was trying to accuse her of. “Ariel love, I'm just doing our friend a favor. Okay, maybe Daniel isn't bad looking, but that's not the point. The point is, I have to save Gillian!”

“And exactly what does that mean?”

“It means I'm going have to use my charm,” winked Hye Kyo. “But I need your help.”

Up ahead, Gillian was fidgeting in nervousness as she walked beside Daniel. She certainly didn't expect him to show up at her aunt's house and now about to attend a show with him. Any girl would almost swoon to be in her position. Who wouldn't be flattered to a point her cheeks would reach the color of fresh tomatoes? But to Gillian, this was worse than a nightmare.

“How come you didn't tell me you had friends in town?” Daniel suddenly jerked her out of her thoughts.

Gillian took a deep breath silently. “Oh... I actually didn't get notified until today.”

“Oh I see,” said Daniel. “Well they are certainly interesting.”

“Yeah, you should try to get to know them.”

Out of nowhere, Ariel rushed to Gillian's side in an urgent manner which was quite unlike her since she was always so calm and poised. “Hey Gillian. I need help looking for something. Can I borrow her for a second?” she asked Daniel.

Daniel nodded, and Gillian was dragged away by Ariel instantly. He could only watched in wonder but quickly shrugged, guessing that it was some type of a girly best friend thing. His thoughts were suddenly thrown to a halt when he felt someone collided into his back.

“Ouch!” Hye Kyo's yelped.

Daniel turned and gawked at the stumbling figure. Being the gentleman that he was, he quickly held her shoulders to help her balance herself.

Hye Kyo blinked her eyes several times. “Sorry... I wasn't watching where I was going.”

“Don't worry about it,” Daniel assured, releasing her once she was steady. “You okay?”

“Um, not really,” Hye Kyo touched her forehead. “I think your shoulders are a bit too stiff...”

He laughed. “Right. You want to sit down and rest? We'll wait for Gillian and Ariel.”

Hye Kyo nodded and was led by Daniel to sit on the nearby bench. All this while, she stared at the side of his face, kind of surprised that he turned out to be such a gentleman. If he wasn't Gillian's brother, he would have been a good candidate for Gillian. But since he was... Hye Kyo smiled.

“Ah, my head hurts,” Hye Kyo sighed. “Can I use your shoulder for a bit?”

Slightly taken aback by her suggestion, Daniel hesitated. But seeing that she meant no harm and it would only be heartless of him to deny, Daniel just nodded.

“Thanks...” Hye Kyo rested her head on his shoulder, certain that the whiff of her hair's fragrance was attacking his nose. “You're such a sweetheart.”

A minute passed. It was obvious that Daniel's expression was starting to turn weary. It wasn't that Hye Kyo's head was too heavy. It just bothered him that Gillian might return suddenly and see them like this. The idea of a misunderstanding was anything but desirable.

“You really like Gillian?” Hye Kyo asked suddenly.

Daniel nodded. “I think I'm in love with her.”

“How are you sure?” she continued as she linked her arms with his, a move that caught Daniel off guard. “What if you guys are not meant to be?”

“What do you mean?” Angered by the notion, Daniel's voice turned up a bit. “There's no such thing as fate. If you want something to happen, you make it happen. Nothing's impossible.”

“Sure...” Such determined talk, Hye Kyo thought. Too bad, you don't consider the things that cannot be controlled or changed. “But what if Gillian doesn't feel the same way?”

At this, she could feel Daniel stiffen a bit, perhaps affected by the potentiality of the unwanted reality. So he's not entirely confident, Hye Kyo thought.

"I'll show her. I'll show her the best things in life," Daniel declared.

Hye Kyo scooted closer to him, tightening her hold. Daniel grew more alert and slightly more uncomfortable at their closeness. "Mmm, how about you show me?" she whispered softly.

Right at that second, Gillian and Ariel could be seen exiting a store. Immediately, Daniel stood up, shocking Hye Kyo as she almost leaned over.

"Fuck," Hye Kyo said under her breath. "Now that's not nice." Staring at Daniel's back, she almost felt insulted that he pulled away so quickly.

"Hey sorry." Gillian said as she approached, not noticing the tension. "Let's go, shall we?"

As Daniel and Gillian walked up ahead, Ariel purposely dawdled behind. She detected the grim expression on Hye Kyo's face and thought that something must be up. "What's wrong? Did your plan work?"

Hye Kyo shrugged. "He proves to more of a challenge than I thought."

"He rejected your move?" Ariel wanted to laugh.

"Shut up," Hye Kyo said. "Maybe he's just shy."

"You know, if he was really Gillian's boyfriend, what you're doing is wrong," Ariel pointed out. "And pretty darn classless."

"Well he's not..." Hye Kyo smiled. "And I'm doing her a favor."

"Sure..." Ariel rolled her eyes. "What are you going to do next?"

Hye Kyo was silent for a moment as she stared at the backs of the duo ahead. Then her smile only widened. "Something Gillian should have done a long time ago."