

Seoul Mates: Tears and Tragedy

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*Just like the last one, this one is for
Pamela Van Den Bosch.
If not for you, I would never have been writing
romantic fiction.
(Of course, some might say that would be a
good thing 😊)*

This book is a work of fiction. All dates, names, places and situations are fictitious, or have been used fictitiously. If you believe I have fictionalized you or someone you know, don't sue me. Seriously. I have no money, so it would be a waste of everyone's time

THEN

Dreary oldies music waffled out from the speakers, and she hunched forward, wrapping her arms around her knees. The rum and Coke in her hand (her third), was making its way down her throat much faster than its predecessors. Terri considered the ramifications of this for a moment, and then said, "Ah, screw it." The remainder of the drink vanished down her esophagus. A warm glow suffused her body, and Terri closed her eyes; the feeling was almost enough to blot out the mind-numbing boredom of being here.

"Pretty crap party, huh?"

There was a barely audible squeak as the speaker positioned himself next to her on the faux leather couch. Terri glanced over, already drawing in the breath she'd need to tell him she wasn't interested.

It was one of the reasons she tended to avoid social gatherings, actually. The males of the species seemed to take one look at her long dark hair, steel-grey eyes and curved figure and lose all thoughts except those concerned with reproduction.

Before she could speak, though, that breath caught in her throat. The man she was looking at was, well, *plain*. Bottle-thick glasses were perched on the end of his nose, his shaggy brown hair looked like it had been dragged through a hedge and then electrocuted, and the fluoro-yellow shirt he was wearing reflected off his face and made him look an awful lot like a zombie. Terri relaxed. In her experience, this type of guy was never confident enough in himself to cause her any hassle.

“Uh-huh,” she agreed.

It had been a moment of weakness on her part, really, when she’d agreed to come.

“Please,” Melissa had said in that wheedling tone she had. “It’s the last chance we have before John ships out.”

John was their elder brother. He’d joined the Army straight out of school, worked his way up the ranks and was now heading over to Korea to join the forces there in... doing whatever it was they did.

“I wouldn’t miss it for anything,” Terri had lied with a smile.

And so she had dutifully turned up at John's farewell send-off, mentally prepared for hours of boring conversation with well-meaning family members, and for fending off advances from lecherous males. She had not been disappointed. It seemed that everyone who wasn't a relative was either crazy or horny or both. Of course, some of the relatives fitted into those categories as well.

She gave a mental shrug. At least alcohol subdued the boredom a little, and there was plenty of it (and free).

"What're you drinking?" the guy asked.

"Rum and Coke." Terri replied without thinking.

"Cool."

He stood and moved off. Terri looked at his retreating back for a moment, and gave another mental shrug. That was certainly the shortest (and strangest) conversation she'd had so far. Terri went back to staring into space and reflecting on all the other things she could be doing instead of being here. Plucking every hair on her legs individually was definitely starting to work its way up the list of preferred options.

There was another squeak next to her. Terri sighed, turned her head away, and tried to project an aura of disinterest. It didn't work. A glass of dark liquid meandered its way into her field of vision.

“Rum and Coke.”

Terri started. It was that guy again, back with a drink. She took it and gave an experimental sniff. It certainly *smelled* like rum, but apparently it was easy to slip someone a Mickey these days. The drugs they used were colorless, odorless, and tasteless. She wondered whether to politely refuse the beverage, or just tell him to eff off. She didn't have to decide though, as the guy seemed to know what was going on in her head.

“It's safe,” he told her. “If you're not sure, you could always have mine.” This last, he said with a smile. It seemed to transform his face from bland and boring to... something else. Nothing drop-dead gorgeous, sure, but something. He held up his drink. It too was dark, and smelled of rum.

“But what if you've spiked them both?” Terri asked.

The guy took a sip from his and swallowed.

“Then I've just roofied myself. Want me to try yours?”

Terri shook her head, smiling despite herself.

“But you might have spiked them both,” she said, “and have taken an antidote or something.”

“Clever,” he replied. “Or maybe I spiked them both because I've been secretly building up my tolerance, training for this moment for years.”

The conversation progressed from there, segueing into old movies, (both were fans of *The Princess Bride*), music (neither particularly liked pop, both were fond of country), and food (he loved Asian food, she preferred Italian). The night sped by on supersonic wings, and before either of them realized, it was two a.m. and almost everyone else had gone home.

Unable to stop herself, Terri yawned. That set the guy off, and he yawned as well, jaws cracking. He looked at his watch and cricked his neck.

"Wow," he said. "I didn't know it had got so late. I'd better be going. Thanks for a fun night."

He stood and offered his hand, which Terri shook. "I'm Tony, by the way."

"Terri."

He smiled. "I know. I've been friends with John since high school. See you round."

Tony strode off towards the exit, stopping briefly to speak to John, shake his hand and give him a farewell hug. Terri stood as well, stretching her legs to get the blood flowing again. Then she too went over to John.

"Bye," she said.

"That's it? I'm shipping out of the country, you never know when you'll see me again and all you

can say is 'bye'?" John gave her a brotherly punch on the shoulder. "Come here."

He stretched his arms out and wrapped her in a bear hug.

"Take care of yourself, little sister," he told her.

"I will. You too," she replied.

Once she was able to extricate herself from his embrace, she walked outside into the warm summer night.