

A Question of Love

a *Flower of Evil* fanfic

by **Rodo**

Do you love her?

The question floated back into Hyun-soo's head that night when he tried to fall asleep. Beside him, Ji-won was snoring softly, one hand clutching the blanket. Hyun-soo lifted his head so that he could look at the clock on the bedside table and sighed. It was far too late to be awake and this wasn't like him. He supposed his mind hadn't yet finished processing the conversation with Hae-soo.

Do you love her?

To his amusement, the only other people to have asked him that question before Hae-soo were his "parents". Everyone else just assumed he did. How odd, that the only people to ask were the ones who should already know the answer. Hae-soo knew him like nobody else, knew his limitations, and his partners in identity theft knew he didn't work like other people and appreciated that about him. They knew he did not love, was not able to feel the emotion, so why ask?

Maybe, since they were normal, they couldn't conceptualize why someone like him might enter into a happy relationship with another person. For them, a relationship and love were intertwined and one without the other was as hard to imagine as the emotion itself was to Hyun-soo. Why risk discovery by letting another human being into his life, his home? Why force yourself to play someone else every day to allay suspicions? Why add a child to their lives and complicate matters further? To them, the only possible answer was love.

Do you love her?

Of course he did not. Living with Ji-won was ... comfortable, he supposed. His father's ghost had stopped haunting him. With her around, it had become

easier to play Baek Hee-sung. Thanks to her he got all that practice and then there was the routine of having to smile or look worried, of being considerate and trying to figure out what people thought and what the appropriate reaction was. Practice had made it easier. And Ji-won had been the perfect person to practice with. He still didn't know what she thought of him back when they first met, of his coldness and awkward manners. He had never asked. Perhaps she had thought he was shy. She had coaxed him into being more open (while he had tried to act more normal and to be less open) and somehow, they had shaped their lives to fit around each other. The process was still somewhat baffling to Hyun-soo, even if he appreciated the result. It was nice to be around another human being who did not think him a monster, who treated him like he was normal. Not even Hae-soo did that, although he supposed she loved him a lot. It was relaxing. It made him feel lighter somehow. Less like an animal on the run.

Do you love me?

Ji-won had asked him over a beer. For a second, he had frozen. Had she ever asked him before? He didn't remember. She must have. He didn't remember if he'd lied to her then, whether he had done it convincingly enough. They had been married for so long. Could he lie? Should he? Did he want to? Hyun-soo didn't know then, and he still didn't know a couple of hours later. He had taken the easy way out, given her a misleading answer, and now wondered if it had been a mistake. He tried to recall how Ji-won had reacted, down to the last detail, the minute movements at the corners of her eyes, the way the corner of her mouth curled when she was especially happy, and something felt off about it. Somehow, based on everything he had learned about her, he thought she should have reacted differently. He couldn't put his finger on how exactly, but it bothered him. Maybe that was why he couldn't fall asleep.

Next time, I should lie, he thought.

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