

Mojito & More

an *Inside Men* fanfic

by Rodo

for CousinShelley

WOO JANG-HOON HUFFED in annoyance as he was led down the narrow corridors of the club. It was 11 PM on a Saturday, he hadn't slept properly all week and there was work piling up on his desk hourly no matter how hard he tried to whittle down the never-ending stack of files. He had been looking forward to – as paradoxical as it sounded – doing some overtime while no secretary was smacking her lips and tapping her nails. Instead, he was in some mid-level club with bright, pulsating lights, hostesses in skimpy clothes and the stink of sweat, alcohol and smoke. All because of Ahn Sang-goo.

The hostess swivelled on her heel, stopped and motioned towards a door. When Jang-hoon nodded, she turned around and left, probably without sparing him much thought. With a sigh, he opened the door. What lay beyond was one of those private rooms many clubs had – garishly decorated in a manner that only looked pleasing to drunk people and that was an eyesore to anyone else. Jang-hoon had seen many under UV light, back when he had been a policeman. He'd been in them because of gangsters back then, too.

Ahn Sang-goo looked up when he entered, but then just looked back down at his drink. There was nobody with him, no karaoke, no myriad of empty bottles. Just a man, staring at a tall glass that was half-empty. He was uncharacteristically sober – no pun intended. Usually, he would have cracked a bad joke already, or at least greeted Jang-hoon with a smarmy smile.

“Really?” Jang-hoon asked incredulously, “I’m here because you’re sulking in a club? That’s it?”

Finally, Sang-goo looked up from his drink for more than a second. “I didn’t ask you to come.”

“No, your underlings did. For some reason, they’re scared shitless of you right now and think I’m the only one whose head you won’t bite off.”

Sang-goo narrowed his eyes for a moment, then his entire pose relaxed, like he was growing bigger and smaller at the same time. “I just wanted to be alone.”

“That’s what I told them, but apparently you never want to be alone.”

“I want to be now.”

Jang-hoon rolled his eyes, but even if it wasn’t serious, he was here already, and it wasn’t like he was going to get any more work done today. So he sat down at the table next to Sang-goo and fished a cigarette out of its package, before remembering that it was illegal now. When he put it back, he finally got a look at the drink Sang-goo was nursing in the grubby light.

“So you do know what a mojito is,” he observed. Crushed green leaves and lime wedges floated in between the ice cubes.

“I told you, didn’t I?” The last time they had been on that topic, he had continued to make corny jokes. Something really was up with him, the guy who had called Jang-hoon hadn’t been kidding.

“Are you going to tell me what’s up or should I just go somewhere where I don’t risk a fine for smoking?”

It was Ahn Sang-goo’s turn to roll his eyes, but he didn’t tell Jang-hoon to get lost. Instead, he asked, “Do you know what day it is?”

Jang-hoon thought for a moment, then shook his head.

“It’s the day Joo Eun-hye died, according to forensics.”

Then Jang-hoon remembered. A year ago, everything had been falling apart. Joo Eun-hye had been Ahn Sang-goo’s last chance. But when Jang-hoon had tracked her down, it had been too late. He remembered how she looked in that car. A suicide, they had concluded, even if everyone who knew her swore she wasn’t the type, and anyone who knew of the case knew that there was a good reason for a lot of powerful people to want her dead. To Jang-hoon, she had been a pretty face and a name. To Sang-goo, she had been more, even if Jang-hoon had no idea how much more.

“And so you drink mojito in a shitty little club.”

Sang-goo shrugged.

“That doesn’t make any sense.”

“Eun-hye liked ‘shitty little clubs’ and mojitos were her favourite.”

That made a little more sense. Still... “That’s an... unusual way to remember the dead.”

Sang-goo snorted and very deliberately lifted the glass with his left hand, closed his lips around the plastic straw and sucked. Jang-hoon couldn't quite suppress the smile that wormed its way onto his face. When he was done, Ahn Sang-goo smirked back.

"Joo Eun-hye was an unusual woman. I've never met another quite like her."

Jang-hoon knew an invitation to ask questions when he heard it. "How so? Could she tame the great Ahn Sang-goo?"

Sang-goo scoffed and tilted his head. "Worse, she could get one over on me. Not many people can."

Jang-hoon extended his hand and flicked his fingers against Sang-goo's prosthetic one. Sang-goo might think he was one of the best in his field, but the truth was, there were far worse people out there than tattooed gangsters with their rockabilly hair. True evil wore suits and ties and expensive rolex watches to board meetings and conferences.

"So," Jang-hoon continued, "I have to ask: was there anything between you?"

Sang-goo looked insulted by the mere notion. "I am pretty, but not that pretty. Plus, Eun-hye was a pro and a friend. One of the best friends you could hope for, but I was never her type."

"She didn't like pretty?"

"She liked rich."

They exchanged a look. Jang-hoon had known enough women like that too, and he couldn't hold it against them. Neither could Sang-goo, it seemed. There was just something about a woman who knew what she wanted and went for it.

"Would you have gone for it, if she had liked you?"

For a moment, silence descended on the room and Jang-hoon stared at the purple patterned wallpaper while Sang-goo was in deep thought, twirling the straw through what remained of his drink. The ice cubes were almost melted and the mint leaves looked sad and drab.

"No," Sang-goo finally replied. "Don't get me wrong, I would have been tempted. She was that pretty. But I guess she's not quite my type either. I suppose I like them nicer. No, 'nice' isn't quite the right word. I like them less mercenary. Nice would be boring. So, what's your type?"

Jang-hoon shrugged. "Can't really say. I like them pretty, I suppose."

When Sang-goo heard that, he grinned. It was half a human grin and half that of a fox. "So what you're saying is *I'm* your type?"

Jang-hoon didn't dignify that with an answer. He didn't need to. He could already see Sang-goo starting to preen, and it seemed the last of his dark mood was escaping into the night, now that he had found a reason to gleefully mock someone. Well, if that was the price...

Almost as an afterthought, Sang-goo finished off his drink, then he sidled over to Jang-hoon, until he was close enough to wrap an arm around his shoulders and draw him close. Jang-hoon could smell his aftershave and stale smoke, and when Sang-goo opened his mouth, there was a hint of mint on his breath.

"You should have told me that sooner, you know?" he murmured into Jang-hoon's ear. The position was uncomfortably warm, except for the cold prosthesis that brushed against his cheek. They hadn't been this close since Jang-hoon had hauled Sang-goo's unconscious ass into a love hotel.

"Knock it off," Jang-hoon protested, but it sounded as hollow as it felt.

Sang-hoon just huffed in amusement and put his real hand on Jang-hoon's cheek and gently turned his head to face him. Then, without any more theatrics, he kissed him. For a second, Jang-hoon didn't quite know what to make of it. It was a familiar yet unfamiliar dance, and when he just did nothing, Sang-goo deepened the kiss until Jang-hoon gave in. Two could play this game.

When they came up for air, Sang-goo was smirking again. Heat was boiling in Jang-hoon's blood. He didn't know if this was the best or worst idea he'd had in a while, but he was sure he would find out. But first, he needed to calm down.

"I need a smoke," he said, taking a hold of his cigarettes. "What do you say? How about going outside?"

Sang-goo shook his head. "Sure. Let's have a cigarette. And then I've got an idea for after."

"Oh, you do, do you?" Jang-hoon could just imagine. And he had to admit, the prospect was tempting. Not how he had figured the evening would go, but definitely an improvement.

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