

*You Can Always Call My Cell Phone*

“So that’ll be a full PA *and* a sound guy? Awesome!” Minh could barely contain her excitement, and could only hope she sounded more professional over the phone. They couldn’t see the black leopardess’ tail wagging like a puppy’s, at least.

“Well, we love to support local music, and you guys have popped up on our radar more than once. I’ll keep in touch when we need any more paper work. Have a good show!”

“We intend to, thanks again!”

Minh did a small shuffle dance on the spot in front of her piano, and then dialed her bandmate and guitarist Sneeze. The tiger would be elated; their biggest show to date was coming together. No mean feat considering the five members of the band had to put it together on their own.

The phone rang once, twice, three times. Right before Minh was sure she’d get the voicemail, a female voice came on the line.

“No, I’m not handing you the phone.” The voice was at a distance, like she was holding it at arm’s length. Sneeze’s voice came next, also at a distance.

“Just undo this one a little bit –”

“No. Hello?” The voice, Sneeze’s girlfriend Katie, was obscured by deep, heavy breaths.

“Oh, hi Katie. Is Sneeze there?”

“I can take it if it’s about the Pavilion gig,” his voice sounded closer, as though he was face-to-face with Katie.

“Uhh, he’s a bit . . . tied up at the moment . . .” Katie said, her breath slowing somewhat.

“I can take it if it’s about the Pavilion gig!”

“Sneeze!” Their voices came from a distance again. “Do I *really* have to explain to you *why* I’m not giving you the phone?!”

“She can’t see us; she doesn’t know what we’re doing!”

“Keep this up and we won’t be *doing* anything!”

Minh dropped her ears and her face fell. “Oh-my-God . . .” Even being a gold star lesbian with nipple piercings, this was a bit much for the dark-furred feline. She blamed it on a Catholic upbringing.

“If you undo this one just a *little* bit, I can wriggle out.”

“No.”

“Then put it on speaker.”

“You know *full well* I’m not gonna do that!”

“It’s not that important guys!” Minh was rapidly approaching the point she’d need to bathe.

“She can’t see us!”

“I, don’t, care!”

“Really guys, I’ll just call back.”

“Put it to my ear.”

“Sneeze, the hole you are digging –“

“I’ll only be a sec, put it to my ear.”

“UGH!”

“What’s up Minh?” The tiger’s voice was close now, marred by loud, fast breaths. Minh’s tail tip twitched involuntarily.

“Listen, this sounds like a bad time –“

“Well it *was* a fantastic time . . . “ Katie’s voice was distant now, different from how Sneeze sounded face-to-face. Minh’s mind was assaulted by the image of her leaning up but not quite . . . pulling away, oh goodness.

“One second!” Sneeze said. Minh’s face contorted into a grimace. “Did you hear back from the sound guys?”

“Uh . . . “ All the leopardess wanted to do was shower. “Yeah. They’ll let us use some stuff.”

“Awesome!” Sneeze’s enthusiasm, a constant factor of his personality, made Minh wince considering his girlfriend was writhing on top of him. “So we’ll have monitors?”

“Full PA,” Minh said, syllables as quick as she could make them.

“Oooh, really?”

“Sound guy.”

“No waaay! A sound guy too?” Sneeze’s voice was bubbling with excitement. Minh didn’t want to picture his face right now. She didn’t want to picture anything right now.

“I’ll have to call you back when I – ooh – have a hand free.”

Minh nodded, only half-aware Sneeze couldn't see it.

"I'll – uh – I'll talk – ah – " Minh's eyes went wide and she pulled the phone from her face. There was a fumbling noise but Sneeze's voice sounded just as close. "Katieeee, what are you doing?" The tiger's voice was a purr.

"You're lucky I'm still here." Katie's voice was *not* a purr. She sounded close now, she must have been – nope, not picturing it.

"Yes, yes I am."

"You're lucky I love you so much."

"I *really* am."

"Guys," Minh stammered, "You haven't – "

"You gonna make this up to me?"

"Mmm, twice if I can."

"Hey guys . . . " Minh couldn't will her voice above a tremble.

"Big talk, considering you can't even use your hands."

"I, uhhn, like a challenge."

"Hey, uh . . . " Minh's finger was raised like she was answering a question in class.

"Ooh, Kitty . . . "

"Feel good?"

"Unh, twice is a *great* idea . . . "

Minh finally realized she could cut the line on her end and did so. She put the phone down on her piano and rubbed her hands on her pants.

"Shower," she said, turning toward the bathroom.