

Relapse

External Dormitory, Room 613 – 2.18 PM

Due to her recent breakdown, Lexi took a few days off. A regretful David made sure to accommodate her every need while she rested at home. He brought her *Ahjumma's* menu of the day along with a bowl of *bingso* and the old lady's best wishes.

"Today's menu is *Jajangmyeon*, your favorite" David announced as he put the delivery bags on the kitchen counter "And an overdose of *Kimhap*, greetings of the chef".

"Ouah, *komaweoyo* David. I should collapse more often" she carelessly bantered.

"Ya! You should not be joking about things like this" he scolded her, giving her a vexed look.

She calmed him down "*Arasseoyo*, I won't say it ever again".

"That's a relief" he sighed as he brought lunch to the living room "Are you hungry?"

"Always" she ecstatically responded.

Upon finishing their meal, David handed Lexi her medication. The doctor prescribed her some Xanax to help her relax.

"So, what's new with you?" she initiated, still curious about his whereabouts on the night of their celebratory hangout.

"You know, the usual. Work, research, conferences, and a lot of travel" he alibied himself.

"Is that why you have been missing my calls and ignoring my texts?" she felt silly "I actually thought you were holding some kind of grudge against me. Ah, it's a relief" she breathed out as she laid down on the couch, David sat on the armchair beside her.

"Actually" he suddenly muttered with a serious tone, eyes on the ground "There is something that I want to talk to you about".

"Go ahead, I'm listening" she replied, taking notice of his serious tone.

“You see, I have been a loner my whole life, books were my only companion and I did not mind. I travel a lot so despite not having friends, it never bothered me. And then, I met you. From the moment I first set eyes on you in the busiest section of Seoul, there was something about you that bewitched me. We’ve been in each other’s lives for seven months now, but I feel like I’ve known you my whole life. Although I haven’t been seeing much of you recently because of your busy schedule, but you keep haunting my thoughts. I don’t know how to explain what I’m feeling and I even tried to distance myself to see if I was just making it up in my head or if there is really something worth clinging to. Lexi, what I’m trying to say here is ...”

David lifted his head to scan her reaction. To his disappointment, Lexi was napping. Her medication usually knocked her out as soon as she took her daily dose. He grabbed the blanket set on the couch and wrapped her with it. After cleaning up the table, he scrutinized the sleeping trainee one last time “I like you, Lexi Martinez. *Jalja*”.

A few hours later, Lexi woke up from her nap. It took her a second to realize that she has slept on the couch yet again. Half-asleep, she picked her most recent book that she kept on the table and started going through the pages; reading it helped with her creative writing as she brainstormed through her ideas. Typing her essays, on the other hand, was another issue. Her medication made her fingers numb so she couldn’t advance as much as she used to before.

A couple of knocks on the door brought Lexi back to the real world. She looked around the living room to see if David has forgotten anything since he only visited her once per day, bringing her both lunch and dinner. Barefoot, she slowly walked towards the door, wondering who it could be.

“*Nuguseyo?*” she interrogated, anticipating.

“Alexandra-ssi, it’s Namjoon” he replied in a husky voice.

Lexi stood in her place, frozen. She couldn’t believe what she just heard so she glimpsed through the peephole; Yep, that’s him in person. Taking a look at her current state, she hesitated whether she should open the door or not: her hair was styled in a messy bun and she was clothed in an oversized gray sweatshirt hiding her denim shorts.

“Annyeonghaseyo Namjoon-ssi, what brings you by?” she engaged the minute she opened the door.

“I just wanted to check up on you. Are you feeling better?” he worryingly divulged.

“The medication makes me dizzy but other than that I’m alright, *Kamsahamnida*” she bowed and showed him in.

“I’m sorry I wasn’t able to drive you to the hospital myself. I hope this will make up for it” he apologized as he put a branded grocery bag on the table “If my memory serves me right, this used to be your comfort food back home” he reached for the pot in the bag and handed it to her, the label spelled **Yogorino**.

“Namjoon-ssi” she spoke, barely finding the words “You shouldn’t have, this is very generous of you. *Kamsahamnida*”.

“It’s nothing, really. Just make sure to get back to work already, the studio is empty without you setting a mischievous mood in it” he admitted. Spotting her homework on the table, he quickly changed the subject “How is your self-help quest going?”

“Slow. My hands are drugged, so I am mostly doing the reading” she pouted “*Chamkkanmany*o, I’ll get us a couple of spoons”.

When she headed back, she found Namjoon leafing through the book. He looked at her, and motioned her to sit beside him.

“I have been finding trouble finishing the ballad lately. Maybe if I help you with your essay, I can help myself in the process”.

With a spoonful of Frozen Yogurt, the two of them sat working on a new piece. Lexi projected her thoughts and feelings as her partner wrote them down. Soon enough, her voice started to fade away, as she fell in slumber.

A sudden silence filled the room. Namjoon put down the computer, and carried Lexi to her bed. As he tucked her in, he held her hand wishing her good night. In her sleep, she tightened her grip preventing him from freeing his hand. He smiled at her, grabbed a near-by chair and seated himself next to her.

With the first sunrise, Lexi opened her eyes. She tried to stretch but her arms felt heavy. She noticed that she has spent the night in her bed, instead of passing out in the living room once more. As she tried to reach out for her phone, she felt her right hand detained.

By the bedside, a sleepy Namjoon was still holding her hand firmly. While she was contemplating him, he regained consciousness, causing her to take her hand back in a scurry.

“Good morning sleepy head” she greeted him with a smile.

Namjoon woke up startled “What time is it? I must have fallen asleep. Sorry for the sudden intrusion”.

“*Kwenchanayo*, thank you for tucking me in. My back started aching because of all the times I fell asleep on the couch” she said “Do you want to stay for breakfast?”

Namjoon sat in the dining room, while Lexi made coffee. As she sat across him, he engaged in a conversation, clearing the previous awkward moment “Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure, go ahead” she replied, anticipating his next words.

“It’s about what happened yesterday” he suggested “Do you want to talk about it?”

Lexi knew she couldn’t escape the silence any longer. She gathered her thoughts, and recited what seemed to be a page from her book of despair.

“You see, as a child, I always noticed my mother’s constant fatigue, one could mistake it for physical illness, but I grew up watching her light flicker for so many years. My mother, the apple of my eye, had such a big heart, caring for every living person, even those who harmed her, up to the point where exhaustion was the price for her unconditional love. With time, her fatigue heightened. It all starts with anxiety right? Then the anxiety crawls into one’s body and soul, leaving them in bed, motionless, helpless, lifeless. By the time we discovered my mom’s depression, it was already too late; she was so emotionally exhausted that she could barely move on her own, my father and I were always by her side, caring for her every need. Upon telling her doctor how it all started, and given the state she was brought in to him, he was amazed that she survived her twenties. My mother had a rough childhood, and a rougher adolescence, and as a result, she became a weak adult. But what’s beautiful about her is her will, her will to live, to laugh, to love. As weak as she was, she fought stronger than ever and nourished her soul; she challenged her depression. It took my mother every bone in her body to get back on her feet, and the first thing she decided upon was to support my dream. Reading that song yesterday brought back so many memories. She is fine now but because I never know when her next breakdown will occur, and being far away from her now, it kills me inside”.

When she finished her talk, Namjoon stood still, speechless. He held her hand to comfort her “I’m glad she’s doing well now. She’s brave for going through all of this, and she’s lucky to have you and your father by her side” he then added “You should give yourself a break, you know. Be strong, and know that I’ll always be here whenever you need a shoulder to lean on”.

“I truly appreciate it, thank you for everything” she expressed her gratitude.

The rapper checked his watch and gasped “I should get to work. Rest well Alexandra, I will see you tomorrow”.

Lexi walked him to the door and went back to bed. As she hugged the sheets, their conversation caused a nostalgic feeling to build inside of her. She reached out for her phone and dialed her mother’s number.

A tender voice greeted her “Hello sweetie, how are you doing?”

“Hey, mom. I’ve been better, how are you and Dad?” she broke in silent tears.

“Lexi dear, is everything okay?” her mother asked worryingly.

“Everything is fine, I just miss you guys” she announced “Mom, I’m coming home”.