

Separate ways

SNU English Department – 2.18 PM

“Hello?” Lexi’s voice echoed through the phone.

An elderly voice replied “Good evening Lady Scholar. How have you been?”

“Pr. Jenkins, it’s been a while” she responded “How is your mission going?”

“It was a great experience, and I come bearing gifts” he engaged “As you probably heard, my mission took place in one of the most elite universities abroad, and I had the chance to help polish some of their newest majors: creative writing. You should guess by now that I have submitted all of your writings to this department; including the ones you delivered to Pr.Lee in my absence, which he faxed me. Needless to say that the school board was amazed by your talent for words and your acceptance to join their program was rather offered than asked for, along with a scholarship that is only granted to five out of 25 students who will be joining you in this course. I have signed you up for next year” he concluded “Miss Martinez, get ready to become a woman of letters”.

On the other side of the line, Lexi stood speechless. Although she had expectations for her future in writing, she did not think that she would get this opening on her first year.

“I truly appreciate the opportunity sir but ...” she hesitated “What about my literature course?”

He chuckled “A writer shouldn’t be bound by a single program. A writer should feel liberated; that’s what writing is all about. If I haven’t caught sight of your potential, I wouldn’t have asked you to write a different genre in the first place. You were born to tell stories Lady Scholar; I trust that you will deliver yours truthfully”.

External Dormitory, Room 613 – 3.09 PM

“Thank you for everything Pr. Jenkins, I will not disappoint” Lexi ended the call.

Becoming a writer was her constant wish for almost three years; and this bachelor degree will give her the boost she needed to shine in her field. Only this time, her heart wasn’t only faithful to ink and paper.

Kneeling on the floor, she tried to process everything that Pr. Jenkins had laid upon her. Ten minutes is all it took to break Lexi's balance, a balance that she had fought so hard to retrieve.

Upon hearing steps approaching the laundry room, she tried to compose herself, but failed miserably. Feeling Namjoon's presence by her side calmed her for a moment before it wrecked her all over again. Unable to look him in the eye, she mumbled "Namjoon, we need to talk".

"What's wrong baby? Who was that on the phone?" he worriedly questioned.

"That was Pr. Jenkins, he is back from his mission abroad and he called to deliver some news" taking a deep breath, she gathered her strength to engage in another nerve wrecking conversation "It's about my creative writing essays".

"Well, that's great news! What is all this commotion about then?" he asked, still unable to understand her sudden change of mood.

"He signed me up for a program next fall in the university where his mission took part. My file is being transferred as we speak" she finally disclosed, almost not believing her own words.

As the situation started to clear up, he inquired "How long is this program?"

"Two years. I have to leave by the end of the summer" she revealed "I'm not even sure if I want this anymore".

Finally gathering the pieces, Namjoon brought Lexi closer to him, tightening his embrace. Despite not saying a word, the couple knew what this sudden news meant for them. He could feel her tears soak his chest.

"Go for it, Alexandra" he whispered in her ear "You have worked hard for this your whole life, don't let anything get in the way of your dreams".

She objected "But this is not anything, this is us: I don't want to give up on us".

"*Ya Jagi*, no one is asking you to do that" he nervously chuckled "Besides, we still have the whole summer in front of us. Let's live it one day at a time".

"*Aish*, I don't want to think about this any further ... I just want to cherish every moment we get to spend with one another from here on" she put her arms around him, initiating a bear hug as if she was going to lose him in that very moment.

Suddenly, the washing machine signaled the end of the cycle "Your shirt is ready; let me dry it for you".

BIGHIT Recording Studio – 4.30 PM

Lexi dragged her feet to work. For the first time since she started working, her smile completely faded away. As she accessed the studio, her gloomy mood did not go unnoticed by her *hoobae*.

"*Unnie*, what happened?" Sunnie asked, concerned.

Lost in her own thoughts, Lexi barely heard her trainee's question "Hmm?"

"You seem distracted. Is something wrong?" she solicited again.

"*Ani*, you just caught me brainstorming" she inspired her "How are we doing with the rest of the songs? We only have two months left, you know".

Shinah shrugged "Ah *Unnie* you are such a workaholic! We have two months until the debut alone, but the rest of the songs will not be released at the same time. Just relax; let's take it one step at a time".

Lexi stared at her apprentice for a good minute; she reminded her why she loved working with her so much. While the tutor was fiery, the student was serene: One was the Yin and the other was the Yang, they simply completed each other.

Stepping forward towards Sunnie, she held both her hands tight "Shinah, I want you to know that I'm proud of you. You have come a long way since we've met and I want you to carry on, whether I'm with you or not. Rise and shine Sunnie, I believe in you".

"*Unnie*, you're worrying me" she lamented "Are you leaving me?"

"Don't worry child, I am not going anywhere" she hugged her. "For now" she thought to herself.

The girls spent the rest of the afternoon going through the drafts to finalize the rest of the album's songs. By the end of the session, Lexi opened her gray binder and retrieved five sheets of what looked like songs' outlines.

"Here you go" she handed Sunnie the copies.

Receiving them, Shinah asked "*Unnie*, what are these?"

"These are some rough drafts I have written a while ago. They are unfinished, but maybe you can touch them up and use them as your own" the tutor suggested.

"But, *Unnie*" the trainee exclaimed "This is your personal work, I can't take it".

"Shinah" Lexi stopped her "You inspired me to write these, but I don't have that spark in me to deliver them right. You, on the other hand, make the perfect candidate to complete my work".

"*Kamsahamnida Unnie*" Shinah bowed "I will take good care of these notes and promise to value them".

"I'm sure you will" Lexi smiled "I have an appointment to get to, I will see you tomorrow Sunnie".

BIGHIT Conference Room – 6.13 PM

"*Sajang-nim*, thank you for meeting me on such short notice" Lexi greeted Hitman Bang.

The CEO greeted her back "Of course Lexi-ssi, what can I do for you?"

"*Sajang-nim*" she divulged "I have received some news regarding my studies recently. I have to leave the country by the end of summer".

Startled, Bang Si Hyuk met Lexi with eyes of confusion "Did something bad happen? Was your scholarship revoked?"

"*Animmnida, sir*" she put his mind at rest "I have received an offer to engage in a new program that is related to my current major. For that matter, I have been transferred abroad to attend the university that hosts this major".

"I see" he analyzed the situation "Well, do you wish to terminate your contract?"

“Actually, I was thinking if it would be possible to put it on hold for the time being” she proposed “I will be gone for two years, but I am not sure if I’ll be able to come back afterwards. At the same time, I value my position in this company and I am eternally grateful for being allowed such an incredible opportunity. I delivered some drafts to Sunnie that I have prepared in advance; she is a bright kid and I trust that she can proceed on her own and write her own lyrics. I will make sure to keep in touch via email to provide my services to the company, be it to my trainee or as a mere ghostwriter”.

The CEO smiled broadly “Your offer is very appealing Lexi-ssi, I’ll see what I can do”.

“Kamsahamnida Sajang-nim” she bowed before leaving the room.

Heart of Seoul – 9.12 PM

Lexi found herself wandering the streets of Seoul, reminiscing about the very first day she arrived and how her life turned ever since. She acquired everything from the soul city, curing her own soul in the process. Now, her stay has been cut short, and she might be leaving for good.

Whilst being grateful for all the experiences, the opportunities and even the few quarrels that she has been a part of; Lexi still blamed herself for the sudden turn of events. She remembered the first conversation she had with Pr. Jenkins, a conversation that drew her life path for her in a time where she had no other expectations other than being a scholar.

“Miss Martinez, is it? Do come in” Pr. Jenkins motioned her to enter the office.

Taking a seat by his desk, she requested “You asked to see me, sir?”

“Ah yes. I have finished grading the essay you submitted last week” he inquired “I am curious Miss Martinez, why did you take this course?”

Puzzled by his question, she replied “I want to be a writer, and this major seemed like the right thing to start with”.

“Ah yes, of course. But what do you wish to gain from this curriculum?” he pushed the questioning further.

“I want to earn enough potential to mark the literature world with my words” she continued “I want to be read and remembered, but most importantly, I want to be understood”.

"I see" he studied her "Well, your ambition will certainly nourish your potential. In other words, you aspire to be a woman of letters, don't you?"

She smiled, glad that he caught up with her "In other words, yes sir".

"Well, then" he left his seat and started walking around the office "As a professor, I contribute in a lot of pedagogic missions around the world. We often come up with fresh ideas for exclusive programs in other elite universities and we tend to select the best students to meet the admission criteria. Of course, you're still a freshman and you might not get a chance to be scouted until your third year at best".

"But I thought David was scouted during his second year" she questioned in bewilderment.

The old man grinned "Mr. Lee was an exception, Miss Martinez. I am hoping you'll be one too".

"I will try my best Pr. Jenkins" she questioned "But what exactly am I supposed to do to get that chance?"

Pleased by her immediate interest, he explained "Keep writing for now. When the opportunity presents itself and I perceive that you have brought your full potential to the table, I will personally suggest your name for the selection process".

"It would be an honor, sir. I will work hard to meet your expectations and get my name on one of these programs one day" she vowed.

"I am looking forward to reading more of your work. Until then, be well Lady Scholar" he bid her farewell.