

## Love and heartache

### Kahwa Coffee Shop – 11 AM

Since she had no friends, Lexi was content with David's companionship. After ordering their beverages, they engaged in what seemed to be a neverending conversation, talking about her first week at school, his research progress, and their fated encounter the other day.

"So, you and Pr. Jenkins seem pretty close" she said, referring to the warm gathering she witnessed the other day.

"Yes, we are. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be who I am now" he replied, smiling gratefully.

"You mean, you wouldn't be WHERE you are now, right?" she wittily corrected him before he explained himself further "I am WHO I am because of Pr. Jenkins. He saw potential in me, and he taught me to embrace it, to mold it and to reflect upon it".

"He taught you to feel it" she added, her face showed amazement as she remembered the old man's most precious lesson.

"Exactly" he confirmed before taking a sip of his coffee. He could sense that she was intrigued to know if she had potential to shape herself into who she could be "Lexi, what brings you to Seoul?"

She hesitated for a moment, not sure if she should let it all out or simply give the standard reason she gave everybody around her.

"I just got to a point in my life where I didn't know myself anymore. I ended up identifying myself with *Hallyu*. I know it sounds silly because foreigners follow *Hallyu* as a trend, mostly for dramas, Kpop and handsome *Oppas*; but to me, it meant so much more than that. I found a missing piece of myself within *Hallyu* and I decided to come here to complete the puzzle" she told him, her hands surrounding the cappuccino cup and her eyes looking down as she nervously played with her feet. Then, she added "But in order to find myself, I had to let go".

"Was it love?" he asked before realizing she might not be comfortable enough to open up to him.

"Love and heartache" she replied instantly, meeting his gaze "I came with a broken heart, mind and soul".

David fixated her eyes in silence, wondering how her words could be of such heavy weight without pushing her eyes to tear. He shook his head and changed the subject “You said that food was the second thing that brought you here, right?”

“You’re a good listener, David” she smiled “What’s on the menu today?”

#### **Ahjumma Snack Bar – 1.10 PM**

Lexi and David scanned the menu displayed before grabbing a seat. Having a mouthful of delicious food is the one thing that could always keep Lexi happy, no matter the circumstances. As they ordered a plate of Tteokboki and fish cakes, they continued their previous conversation.

“Aside from your major, have you decided what you’re going to do with your days?” he initiated as he picked up the first piece of food.

“Well, I was thinking about taking a Korean class. I mean, it would be a shame to live here and not be able to order food for myself” she hinted, referring to David always reading the menu for her.

“I can teach you, you know. We can start with *Hangul* and move slowly until you learn the basics” he genuinely offered.

“David, I feel offended. I know my alphabet, thank you very much” he raised his eyebrows but was cut off before he could defend himself “Relax, I’m just kidding. I do know the alphabet, but it takes me about a minute to write one word, let alone read one” she giggled, proud of her minor achievements.

“We can start our first lesson today, if you don’t mind” he suggested, hoping not to be rejected.

“Should we go to the library?” she asked, excited about crossing one task off her To-do list.

“The library is too silent for your taste. I have a better location in mind” he smirked “Follow me”.

#### **SNU Campus – 4.12 PM**

Lexi and David sat on one of the benches near the Campus fountain. It was calm enough for a lesson outdoors without the obligation to keep it down.

“Alright, we have about two hours. Try to make the most of the lesson before students from last period crowd the area” he advised her, almost rushing her through the lesson.

“You underestimate me, David. I will get my alphabet right in under an hour” she challenged him.

As expected, Lexi managed to read and write her *Hangul*, almost as a native. Her guesses were right, but her pronunciation needed work, a lot of work.

“*Aigoo*, how can I speak Korean when I sound like a dying goat reciting the alphabet?” she whined, unsatisfied with her progress.

“Practice makes perfect. You think my English was this good the first time I tried speaking it?” he comforted her “Do you know **Ji Sung**? Have you ever heard him speak English?”

“I love that actor, but his accent makes me cringe like a dry sponge. Don’t tell me you evolved from that to this?” she teasingly replied.

“Practice makes perfect” he repeated. He looked at his watch and added “Time’s up. Ready to head back home?”

“Alright, but on one condition: I get to recite what I learned today until we reach the dorm” she asked with pleading eyes, to which he agreed with a grin.

### **External Dormitory’s Hallway – 6.13 PM**

“Home sweet home! Boy, did we walk a lot today, I’m exhausted” Lexi shouted, as soon as they went through the main entrance, her energy showing anything but exhaustion.

David looked at her with admiration. He couldn’t help but to ask, despite his better judgment telling him not to “How come a lively girl such as you ended up broken?”

The question startled Lexi, snatching her from her vital moment. She bowed her head, trying to put her thoughts in check. She took a deep breath and began “It all started two years ago”.

The pair sat in the hallway’s waiting area. It took all of her courage to go back in time and remember the elements that shattered her into pieces, and it took all of his attention to understand her, to comfort her and make her feel safe.