

Where it all started

She was young, she was bright, and she was full of life ... until she was no more.

As a lonely child, her mother was her sister, her companion, her best friend. Being the youngest graduate of her high school, she aimed high and always succeeded. Dentistry was her father's wish, and she would do anything to draw a smile on his face; she would do anything to please her parents.

A straight-A student, Lexi was good at whatever she came across. It might not have been what her heart desired, but that didn't stop her from going all the way. During her five years in dental school, she met a lot of people and made a lot of friends, but it wasn't until she met him that she felt alive, for the first time in her life. Jackson was every girl's ideal type, but most importantly she was his. Best friends since their first class, they ended up crowning their friendship with a stroke of romance on graduation day, allowing their feelings to intertwine and embracing their love for each other. Her parents were proud, her future was secured, and her heart was dominated.

However, all of this was too good to last. As her mother fell ill, Lexi's world crumbled. She'd spend her days working in the clinic, and her nights by her mother's side. Her father was away for work most of the time, which interfered with his wish to look after his wife. Jackson, on the other hand, was her sole consolation: he was the best boyfriend she could ever dream of, especially when he showed his support in such harsh times. He would often check on her and her mother, and sometimes cover her shifts allowing her to leave early. When he didn't know what to do to make her feel better, a simple hug would suffice.

It took her mother a good year to recover, and with that, Lexi's will to live sprang once more. She'd spend most of her time daydreaming about what her life would be like, had she chosen to go down a different path.

On her darkest moments, she would confide in her journal, a gray binder her mother picked for her during her school years, writing down everything that came to her mind. She loved writing more than anything in the world, but according to her father, a hobby can never replace a real job.

Unfortunately, Jackson shared her father's point of view, which saddened her already aching heart. With time, she lost interest in her job: cavities and scale were not something to be excited about on a daily basis, and she wouldn't even consider applying for a post-doctoral program because she never felt passionate about it. Her passion accompanied her pen, her words, and her inner state of mind.

She would often wake up in the middle of the night and run to her desk to write down her thoughts in rhymes, healing herself in the process. She lived in denial for as long as she could, and then she decided to put an end to her misery once and for all.

One Sunny morning, she ran down the stairs looking for her parents, still sleeping in. She gathered her thoughts before knocking on the bedroom door. Once in the room, she asked for them to listen carefully to what she had to say before they gave their last verdict.

“I am no longer happy with what I do. I want to write, I want to project my feelings and share them with the world. I am going to apply for an English major”.

As ambitious as she was, Lexi was not delusional. She knew that she had to master linguistics in order to become a decent writer; and an English course was the best solution. Gaining approval from her parents, she rushed upstairs to get dressed and break the news to her lover boy.

Jackson was not keen on the idea. She would give up a stable career to go after a long lost dream, and he could not comprehend it. Unlike her, his feet were always grounded: he would never allow his mind to think beyond what he would have for his next meal. While she was full of life, he was draining it out of her. They spent half of their time together arguing about her quitting her job, and the other half trying to make up for the time they lost fighting with each other. He would do anything to keep her near him, even if it meant going against her dreams; and as much as she appreciated it, she wished he would understand her for once.

Tired of the endless fights, Lexi eventually gave up. She'd rather live happily with the people she loved rather than have ceaseless debates with her short-sighted boyfriend. She gave up on writing altogether, and convinced herself to focus on her career, for the sake of love.

She woke up one morning to Jackson calling her phone, rushing her to meet him at their spot. Half-asleep, she dragged herself out of bed, wore the first thing she set eyes on and headed out. Jackson had news to share, which was music to her ears; except the music was a funeral tune and her ears almost bled at the sharpness of his words: he received a job offer in a faraway city. A bigger clinic, better opportunities; he finally had a dream, and he wasn't ready to let it go.

Lexi sat on the park bench, her hands shaking and her head spinning. She gave up her ultimate dream for him, yet he shamelessly asked her to support his infant dream. He would be gone for at least two years before he can come back for her, and asked her to wait for him. She couldn't promise him that; in fact, her flame towards him died out for a while now, along with her broken mind.

But unlike him, she couldn't stand in the way of his dream, his happiness. He loved his job more than anything in the world, probably more than her, and she didn't mind because she loved writing more than she loved him. Setting him free, Lexi liberated herself in the process.

It took her two years to get what she wanted. Meanwhile, she healed herself through Hallyu, most importantly with the music, the saddest genre of all: not ballads but hip hop. She loved how much she related to every verse, every line, despite the language barrier. The best thing about her musical sessions was discovering new rappers every now and then. The day she stumbled upon **Tablo's** "Eyes, nose, lips" cover was the day her heart completely healed.

While she kept her job at the clinic to support herself, Lexi applied for universities abroad to carry on with her wish. She thought that if Jackson could leave for another city to follow his dream, it's only fair for her to head to a whole other country to build hers. Surprisingly enough, she got her admission letter from one of the most elite universities in the world: Seoul National University.