

LIFE, ONCE AGAIN!

Chapter 11

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Yoonjung looked at the door of the club room with excitement.

“Oh my gosh, we’re finally getting juniors. I’m so nervous...”

“Stay still, would you?” Danmi said.

But Yoonjung knew better than anyone that Danmi was just as nervous as her. Look, the girl’s legs were trembling already.

“12 people... Not as much as we need, but still really good.”

“We can have plays with more than ten people!”

“If we can. I bet there are a few kids who will volunteer to be stage managers. You have to think about that too.” Joonghyuk butted in.

Yoonjung stuck out her lips in annoyance. Joonghyuk concerned himself with reality too much. Always had to be the logical one of the group. Not that it wasn’t useful.

“Come on, have some hope. They might all want to be actors,” Yoonjung said.

“Yeah, that’d be nice,” Joonghyuk response was voiced as he moved the chamber pot to the corner. It was something the club used 6 years ago. Speaking of which...

“I wonder if the costumes we use now would one day be treated like dirt by our juniors?”

“It probably will.”

“That sucks.”

“Hey, we still got two years until we graduate.” Yoonjung booed Joonghyuk from the back as she said this. It was a habit she had from a young age. All the adults told her to stop making such crude noises with her mouth, but she was never able to get rid of the habit.

“They’re coming soon.” Danmi said, looking at her wristwatch.

Yoonjung looked at the door impatiently. Ten minutes left. Ten minutes until the first years come.

* * *

“You open it.”

“N-no.”

“You scared, bro?”

“No, that’s not it, but...”

“Just open it, then.”

“W-why don’t you open it?”

“Don’t wanna.”

“.....”

Maru stepped forward after watching his friends argue with each other for a second. He grabbed the door handle. The grip coated with stainless steel was worn down from years of use. When he turned it, the door opened with a creak.

“Almost everyone’s here. Let’s begin.”

The voice belonged to Minsung. The acorn head’s. The second years isolated themselves on the left side of the room. Maru headed over to the group of the first years for now.

“Welcome. I’ll be a bit more upfront now that you’re all club members now. There’s something we need to do first. Everyone, look behind you.”

The first years turned around. There was a whiteboard Maru hadn’t seen before. On the top were the names of the second years. ‘Yoonjung Lee’ in particular was written in blue, with the word ‘Club prez!’ right next to it.

“Please write your names one by one there. Along with your majors.” Minsung continued.

The big guy who seemed pretty quiet was the first to move. He took the cap of the marker off and started writing. The two girls wrote their names as well afterwards.

Geunseok Hong, Yurim Lee, Soyeon Kim.

The three of them were all in design. Soyeon threw her marker at Maru, urging he and his friends to follow suit.

“Maru?”

He heard one of them say behind him. He was used to the reaction. Even after graduating, people were often surprised by his name when he met new people. It used to give him stress when he was young, but he looked at his name more positively when he grew older. Having a memorable name in life was a massive plus.

“We introduced ourselves yesterday, so we won’t do it again. You’ll realize that none of us are that bad as seniors or anything, so let’s have fun together, ok? Of course, we’ll still point out things you do wrong. We aren’t here to just have fun.”

Joonghyuk’s words lowered the mood of the room considerably.

“Yo, dude, why do you have to make everything sound so scary? Let’s just hear those introductions from our juniors.”

Minsung clapped, and pointed at Geunseok from one end of the line of the first years.

“You’re tall. Pretty big, too. Name is... Hong Geunseok. Right, you go first. Name, reason for coming here, and your goals. You can say more if you’d like.”

Minsung sat down with a smile.

“Hello, I’m a first year in design, Hong Geunseok. I came to this school because I wanted to come to this club. I’d like to perform a great play in the future with all of you. My first goal is to perform a play in the Seoul Arts Center.”

Geunseok spoke with a firm tone. Almost as if he were assured everything he mentioned would be realized. Instead of arrogance, Maru could feel confidence from the boy’s voice. What a guy. He looked different from the start. To think he had dreams like that...

“Hold up, Geunseok. You came to an engineering school because of the acting club?”

“Yes.”

“For real now?”

“Yes.”

“Why? Other schools have acting clubs too.”

“I wanted to experience the acting club my brother was in.”

“Brother?”

“Yes.”

Yoonjung thought for a second before heading off to the cabinet. The photo books in it contained all of the club’s history.

“I have to ask. Who was he?” She seemed to be the type that just couldn’t hold back her curiosity. She actually seemed visibly more excited than before. More lively. That’s the word. Lively.

“He’s Hong Geunsoo, from the first generation of the club.”

“...I knew it.”

The club became lively at the name. It was understandable. Hell, even Maru knew the name. He was the guy who performed monologues in the Marronnier Park and was in turn scouted by a movie director. Even in his first role, he got decent reviews, and even managed to get an award for it. He primarily worked with musicals afterwards.

‘Amazing guy.’

He could remember the time when he quit his old job to become a bus driver. Hong Geunsoo’s movie hit more than 12 million admissions. He specifically remembered thinking ‘wow, that guy’s an amazing actor’ while he was driving.

“I saw him in Daehak-ro a while back. He was performing in the streets.”

“Right. I heard he was going to be in a movie by an independent director?”

“Really? Wow, a family of actors, huh?”

The second years made faces of anticipation. Even the girls next to Geunseok were glancing at him excitedly.

“Ah, there goes the main role,” Dojin muttered to himself. Daemyung was looking at Geunseok with an envious face.

The club room became pretty energetic. This was pretty good, Maru thought. At least the boy would know a lot about acting. They should be able to do pretty well as long as Geunseok is willing to teach them a bit. Right then, the door opened to let in two more people.

“I’m so sorry!”

“Sorry!”

A boy and a girl jumped into a scene. Maru let out a small ‘oh’ of surprise. The boy was pretty handsome, and the girl had big, beautiful eyes on her. Both of them looked mature.

‘They look nice.’

The second years welcomed them with an applause.

“No worries. Ah, you guys haven’t seen them before, have you? They submitted their forms just yesterday. Well, now that you’re here, why don’t you introduce yourselves?”

The boy bowed curtly at the group.

“Nice to meet you! I’m Park Taejoon, first year in electrical engineering.”

“Hello! I’m Kim Iseul, first year in computers.”

Minsung pointed at the board, gesturing the two to write their names.

Daemyung gave them the markers.

“Thanks.”

Iseul took the marker from Daemyung with a smile, who turned back with an embarrassed look. By the time the two wrote their name, the whiteboard was full of names.

“Step forward, Ms. President.”

Yoonjung stepped out with a little cough.

“The twelve of us will work for a year in this club now. It’ll be hard, but let’s make sure to create a decent play during this time! We’ll be talking about basic stuff about the club during this time. We’ll also exchange contact info. Ah, by the way. Dating is forbidden in the club. Got it?”

Yoonjung said with a wink. Maru saw Dojin's face completely fall apart right then and there.

"...That was a lie! Dating is welcomed as long as you aren't endangering the club! But if something bad does happen... Well, you should know, right?"

Yoonjung started laughing with an evil look. What a strange character she was. Danmi stood up and grabbed the girl's shoulders roughly.

"Why can't you act more like a senior?"

"Whaat?"

"Ugh."

Danmi stepped forward and took out her phone.

"Anyone who doesn't have a phone here?"

No one stepped up.

"Good. Take them out, then."

The first years all took out their phones. Flip phones sliding phones, what have you. Maru took out his phone as well.

"We'll give our phone numbers, so be sure to save it. The club would gather at random times every once in a while. Especially when the opening night of the play comes near. Understood?"

"Yes!"

"Alright then, Yoonjung first."

The second years said their names and phone numbers one by one.

"Now then, starting from Geunseok, say your name and phone numbers as well. Be sure to save it, too. We'll all have to be friends from now on, if we're going to get together for a full year," Danmi said.

Geunseok started speaking pretty much immediately. His voice had depth to it. The type that just stuck to your ears like glue. Was this what talent entails for an actor? Eventually, they managed to finish off at Iseul.

“Well, now that that’s over, why don’t we just talk for a bit? Tell us about your life or something. Hold on, I’ll go get some snacks at a market.”

“I’ll go!” Dojin shouted. Danmi waved him off with a smile.

“You’re good. We’ll be making you do plenty of work in the future. Just enjoy yourselves for now. Alright?”

Danmi walked out with Yoonjung. The door closed shut with a creak. And.

“Now then, juniors.”

Minsung’s expression changed completely. The boy picked up a PVC pipe with a menacing look, silencing the room.

‘Called it,’ Maru thought. It was almost weird that the seniors weren’t trying to put them in their place.

“I’ll tell you this now, but we really do want to get along with you. I love smiling. Alright? But sometimes, other things are needed too.”

He banged the PVC pipe on the wall, making the other kids flinch.

“This isn’t just for show, alright? I’ll hit people. Regardless of gender.”

The first years looked at each other in fear. Except Maru. He was realizing more than ever before how important experience was. This was child’s play compared to being threatened in an actual company.

It was pretty cute, actually. He could feel how much the boy cared for the club. The boy clearly didn’t grab that pipe to feel power. Actually, Maru could see the boy’s hands trembling just a little bit. Probably his first time grabbing it after learning it from his seniors.

Maru turned to look at Joonghyuk, who was also trying to look as calm as possible. It was easy to tell how nervous he was, though.

“You get it?” Minsung said.

“Yes!”

“Good.”

Minsung threw away the pipe. He looked a little more relieved now.

“Seriously, let’s have a good time from now on. This is a good club. We’ll make lots of great memories here, depending on how hard you work. I’ll be hard at work with Joonghyuk as a part of the staff, so we won’t spend as much time with you. But the female seniors will, so treat them well, alright?”

“Yes.”

He was being honest. Maru could easily see how much Minsung cared for the club. The frowns on the first years slowly started to go away as they realized the same thing.

“Yoonjung’s pretty strange, though. You’ll just have to get used to that.”

Pft.

Joonghyuk ended up letting out a small laugh from the back. The first years weren’t able to laugh, though. Well, all except one.

“Heh,” Maru let out. He looked away when he noticed so many people looking at him.

“Maru! I like you. People should smile.”

Minsung slapped Maru’s shoulder lightly with a smile. This was probably what he was like from the start. He’s just not fit for intimidating people with a pipe in hand. If something bad really does happen...

Maru looked at Joonghyuk. That guy would most likely be the one to swing that pipe.

“We’re here!”

Yoonjung and Danmi entered the club room, diffusing the awkward air completely. Sweet soda and delicious chips replaced it, bringing about a pretty happy ending to their first meeting.