

## Once Again 19

### Chapter 19

The auditorium was quiet. No one dared saying anything. So far, five people in total have given their 5 minute speeches so far. Yurim went after Daemyung. She looked pretty strange without a phone in her hand.

She was similar to Daemyung once she was on the chair. There were definitely words coming out of her mouth, but no way to interpret them. She couldn't even enunciate her words properly. Yurim was talking about Cinderella, but pretty much no one was able to tell. The first thing the girl did after getting off the chair was to run off and grab her cell phone.

Soyeon was next. She looked confident at first, but froze up pretty much immediately after getting up on stage. Korean students didn't have much experience with presentations. So actually being put on stage was incredibly pressuring for them. In the end, she wasn't able to do it well either. She was a little better than the other two at explaining the three little pigs, thankfully.

Dojin came next. He was a person who craved attention in his day-to-day life to begin with, so it didn't seem too bad for him. At least, not until Miso decided to throw him a curveball. Something completely different compared to what the other three.

"Look at the direction I'm pointing as you speak."

Miso pointed straight at Iseul. Dojin's topic was...

"Pretend you've been a couple for a hundred days. Explain what you have planned for her in celebration."

Dojin's stress caused him to bite his nails as he spoke. He did manage to explain everything properly, though. In a way that actually made sense. Dojin immediately asked for water upon returning to his seat.

The next one out was Taejoon. He didn't get a curveball or a story or anything. He was just given a self introduction. Though... he had to watch who Miso was pointing with her pen. He struggled a little bit having to keep his eyes on the audience for such a long time. He ended up connecting most of his sentences with 'so...' by the end.

"A little better, at least," Miso gave her first review. A little better.

The faces of the kids who went before Taejoon turned pretty bigger.

"You and you next."

Geunseok got called out with Iseul. They didn't go up on a chair. They did have to stand facing each other, though. Neither of them seemed nervous. Geunseok looked like a rock as always, and Iseul smiled like a cute rabbit.

"Five minutes. Your task is to try to convert the other person to your religion. Doesn't matter how you do it. Begin."

Miso finally sat on the chair to watch. So far, she was looking at the audience while the person was talking. Her eyes met with Maru's several times, even. This time was different, though. She was looking at the two students quite seriously.

"Hello. Do you happen to have some time on your hands?" Geunseok started.

Maru was pretty shocked. The boy's stony face instantly turned into a smiley, big brother-like face. Incredibly friendly. Iseul opened her mouth in response as well.

"Of course I do. Would you like to sit there to talk with me about it?"

Iseul reached out to grab Geunseok's hand. The boy froze up a little bit. This was out of his expectations. Maru was enjoying this exchange. This wouldn't have happened if even one of them weren't here. If Geunseok was replaced by Daemyung, for example? Or Iseul with Yurim? It would've been just one person talking for five minutes.

Geunseok looked down at his hand for a second before putting his other hand over Iseul's. He lowered his head and started in a prayer.

"Oh Heavenly Father..."

"Uhh..."

Iseul looked taken aback. Her conversation partner just straight up closed his eyes. She tried to do something, but whenever she did he just pulled her back towards him. In the end, Iseul could only watch dumbly as Geunseok prayed. The only words she managed to get in was 'amen' at the end of the prayer.

"Good job. Both of you have a good voice. Plus, you're pretty witty as well."

An actual compliment for the first time. Geunseok returned to his seat with a bow. Maru noticed that Geunseok's ears had turned a little red. The boy was definitely feeling nervous as well.

'I suppose being able to control that's what makes him an actor.'

Hold on. Maru looked around him for a second. He was the only one who hadn't gone now. The second years were excluded from the test to begin with. Maru got ready to stand up for his turn.

"Stand up, everyone."

Miso spoke as if she was done with the test. The rest of the first years looked at Miso once, and Maru in confusion.

"What?"

The first years shook their head. Maru stood still. He didn't mind not having to take the test.

"Step forward, head."

Miso pointed at the chair. Maru stepped forward to it, noticing that the chair had become dirty from all the shoes that stepped on it. So the woman just sat down on the thing like it was nothing? Maru shrugged at the woman's boldness before taking off his shoes and climbing on the chair himself.

"Second years, stay there and listen."

The second years nodded.

“First years... give some push up.”

“What?”

The auditorium got a little loud for a bit, but the first years all got in their push up positions in the end. The boys seemed used to it, but the girls... Maru noticed some of their arms were trembling already.

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“What’s your name?”

“Han Maru, ma’am.”

“Maru? Good name. Now, Maru will be giving all of you a speech. Five minutes. Though, being in that push up position for five minutes would be bad, right?”

“Right.”

“What do you think you should do then, Maru?”

“I should find a way to finish this quickly.”

“Right? Then... give me a five-minute speech while thinking about what the other kids did wrong. Talk about... your first impressions of me. Yeah, that’s good.”

Miso glanced over at the first years. Some of them seemed promising, others seemed completely hopeless. The tall guy at the end even looked like he practiced speeches before coming here. But none of that mattered to Miso at the moment. There was only one thing she wanted to see.

‘This guy seemed pretty tactful.’

Tact wasn’t a part of a person’s five senses. Tact came from observation. Careful observation that would lead to accurate guesses about a person’s thoughts. Maru seemed pretty good at that.

Would he understand what Miso wanted this time, though?

Miso glanced at Maru. His face was unchanging. Calm. He was calm when he was called out, he was calm when he stepped forward. Even now, nothing has changed. Well, maybe a tiny bit nervous, but that would only end up helping him focus. This was good. Amazingly so, actually.

Being unafraid of people’s gazes was essential for an actor. In that sense, Maru passed with flying colors.

“Begin.”

As soon as Miso gave him the go ahead,

“First of all, you were very skinny!!”

A shout sprang out of Maru’s mouth. It didn’t have any depth to it, since he wasn’t using his diaphragm, but it was loud enough to reverberate throughout the auditorium. Maru took a deep breath in to continue, but.

“Stop,” Miso interrupted him, “at least you remembered. First years, stand up and wait.”

The kids’ faces were all reddened. Miso took a look over them again. Some of them were fixing their clothes, others were fixing their hair, etc. Out of them, only two of them were facing her straight without even fixing their clothes.

‘Dojin and Geunseok, was it? They aren’t stupid, at least. Geunseok, especially... he’ll be fun to teach.’

“May I come down?” Maru asked behind her.

“Come down, Maru.”

“Yes.”

Maru went back to his spot with his slippers on. Miso sat back down on the chair before continuing.

“I told you in the beginning, didn’t I? Speak as if you want to make yourself heard. You couldn’t even remember that?”

The only one who didn’t avert her gaze was Maru. He had no reason to look away, though, so she let it pass.

“I’ll be giving you a few words of warning, since we’ll be together for a year now. First, you do what I tell you to do. You don’t know what you’re doing otherwise. Second, think. Don’t move just because I told you to move, actually think about it. Understood?”

“Yes!!”

“Good answer. Your voice will only get louder the more you use it. Try to practice enunciating words better for now.”

“Yes!!”

“Good. We’ll stop here for today. Why don’t we actually introduce ourselves now that we’re at it?”

Miso unzipped her jacket, making some of the kids look away in surprise. How adorable.

“Ah, third. I’m only really this serious while I’m at work. Everything else is super lax. I’m done with work now, so feel free to relax. I’ll be super strict once practice starts, though. Understood?”

Miso finished with a smile.

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“See you all soon. We might even see each other tomorrow. Be sure to get my calls when I make them, alright?”

Miso left the auditorium with a grin. Right after she left their line of sight, the students all fell back with a sigh.

“Oh my god.”

“That was scary.”

“I felt a little scared talking to her afterwards, even.”

Everyone had something to comment about the situation. Miso had left quite an impression on all of them. Maru asked a question to Danmi.

“Was the last instructor like this?”

“No, not at all. The last one was very kind.”

“Is that so. Do you like this one better than the last, then?”

“Mm...”

Yoonjung was the one to respond first.

“I like her a lot. Scary though.”

Yoonjung’s eyes were sparkling, which looked a little creepy to Maru. She almost looked like an incredibly playful kid. One of those kids that was really into pain and suffering.

“I think she’s pretty cool, too.” Joonghyuk added.

That confirms it, Miso was not bad at all. Joonghyuk’s words had actual weight.

“Ah, what would we be doing next time, though?”

“Who knows. I’ve never seen someone this invested. The instructor from last time only practiced with us one hour a week.”

Joonghyuk turned to look at the clock. It was 7 o’clock. They had been together with the instructor for 6 whole hours already.

“It’s already this late?”

“Man, I had no idea.”

The students seemed pretty surprised by the clock. Maru thought of the instructor again. She definitely had charisma. Quite a lot of it, too. Otherwise she wouldn’t have the ability to keep the kids attentive for six whole hours. She was completely correct about her being super casual outside of work.

‘She’s a nice adult,’ was Maru’s impression of her.