

Once Again 391

Chapter 391

"A meritorious vassal that calmed the national crisis, huh."

The first thing that came to his mind when he read the title 'Apgu' was Apgujeong, and when he looked inside the script, he realized the meaning of Apgu was the same as what he thought it was.

"Oppa, dinner's ready," Bada burst open the door and spoke.

"I made some ramyun so come quickly."

"What made you cook some ramyun all of a sudden?"

When he went to the dining table, he saw a pot of ramyun with eggs in it as well. There was also some kimchi and some leftover rice. It was the perfect combo. He looked at Bada with suspicion. There was always a reason behind her actions when she did things that she usually didn't do.

"What are you doing? Eat already."

"Did you do something wrong?"

"What the heck are you saying? Shut up and just eat."

Bada was all smiles as she served a bowl for Maru. Although it was very suspicious, Maru decided to eat it anyway since he was hungry.

"How is it going with Dowook these days?"

"Why are you asking that all of a sudden?"

"No real reason."

Bada glanced at him before sighing.

"I wanted to hang out with him but things happened."

"Really? That's a pity."

"But why do I have to report to you about all this?"

"I need to know at least this much as the person that's giving you all your dating expenses."

"Geez."

"If you don't want to, I won't ask anymore. Sorry if I made you feel bad."

"...No, it's not like that."

After tapping the bowl with her spoon, Bada grinned before starting to talk about events that happened with Dowook. From how they started dating to how cute Dowook was. Bada endlessly talked about Dowook just like the Arabian Nights.

"TTO Sungjae versus Dowook. Who do you like more?"

“Of course, it’s Dowook-oppa.”

“Oh my word. It’s Dowook over Sungjae?”

“Well, it’s not like I’d ever get to date Sungjae-oppa.”

“You’re quite realistic when it comes to that.”

Bada giggled. She put down her spoon and swung sideways.

“But I never knew I’d talk about this with you, oppa. I became annoyed when I looked at you up until last year.”

“Really? That’s a bit too much.”

“What’s too much? You didn’t say a single word to me, had me run the errands, kicked me and.... But these days, you’ve changed a bit. Are you sure you’re not sick anywhere?”

“When you become a 2nd year in high school, you’ll mature.”

“Yeah, sure. Like I’d believe that.”

“Why don’t you grow up first?”

“We’re only two years apart. But hey, aren’t you meeting unni?”

“Well, your brother is very busy.”

“Phew, she’s so pitiful. The guy calling himself her boyfriend is like this.”

“I’m treating her extremely well so don’t you worry.”

After eating all the noodles, Maru poured some leftover rice into the broth. When he ate every last bit of food in the bowl and was about to stand up, Bada stopped him.

“I’ll clean it.”

“What?”

Household chores were always split between the two. If one did the cooking, the other would do the dishes, and if one did the laundry, the folding was done by the other. This was an unspoken rule they’d developed since both of their parents were working, but Bada broke that rule and did the dishes as well. After watching his sister wash the dishes while humming a TTO song, Maru quietly entered his room and changed his clothes. He had a hunch. Bada treated him well without a single reason?

“Yeah, right.”

He finished preparing to leave and carefully opened the door.

“Where are you going?”

Bada stood there with a suspicious smile on her face. In one hand was a book, and it seemed that it was her school textbook.

“What is it?”

“If you ate food, you must work for it.”

“It wasn’t free?”

“Nothing’s free in this world. Oppa, do you think the world is that easy?”

Aah, he could see signs that his sister would be successful in society. It was something to be happy about, but still. Maru glanced at the door, but Bada stepped in.

“If you keep doing this, I’m going to take away the credit card from you.”

“That won’t work on me anymore, you know? I know you aren’t going to take it.”

Bada had a bold expression. So this method didn’t work anymore. Maru became dejected and spoke,

“Alright, what do you need me to do?”

“Homework.”

“What homework?”

“Holiday homework. The day after tomorrow is the first day of school, but I haven’t done anything yet. It’s nothing hard. You just need to copy.”

“What are you going to do?”

“English homework.”

“There are two days left of your holiday. What have you been doing this whole time?”

“Don’t nag me and help me out already. If I don’t do this homework, the teacher will hit me.”

Bada pushed the textbook and the notebook to his hands.

“Instead, I’ll do cleaning and make dinner all of next week.”

Now that was a rather attractive proposal. How hard would a middle school-level homework assignment be? And how much could she have? If he could be free from preparing dinner and cleaning with a couple of hours of investment, it would be worth it.

“You can’t go back on your words, okay?”

“What do you take me for? Well then, you’re doing it?”

“I get it so give it to me.”

Just as he thought that he should finish it up quickly and research more about the era that the drama was set in, Bada rushed into her room and came back out with a pile of books. It almost definitely didn’t seem like it could be done in a day.

“All of that?”

“Yeah.”

Bada put down the books on the floor with an innocent smile. Did middle schools give so much homework for the holidays?

“You can’t go back on your words, okay?”

Why did he suddenly think of the saying ‘a tiger father does not beget a dog son’. Maru, who just received the same words he said to Bada, scratched his eyebrows and thought about ways he could escape this situation. Persuasion, flattery, or getting angry. He didn’t think that any of them would work. Bada wasn’t someone who would be persuaded with words, nor would she be tempted because of some flattery. If he got angry, she would shout back at him, so he didn’t have a choice.

He was going to spend the last weekend of his summer holiday while relaxing and reading his script, but it seemed that it was out of reach. Just as he was about to start his wrist labor, he thought of a solution from Bada’s face, who was grinning.

“Fine, I’ll do it.”

“Really? You’re doing all of that, okay?”

“Okay. Well, it’s just copying and simple problem solving, right?”

“Yeah. There’s nothing hard.”

“Alright, that should be easy.”

Bada clenched her fist before shouting ‘yes’.

“If you can’t do it by tonight, you can finish it off tomorrow.”

“Since I’m doing it, I should finish it today.”

“That’s good for me.”

Bada sat down in the living room and started writing something in her notebook. Seeing that, Maru quickly took out his phone. He scrolled through his contacts and called the person that would save him.

-What is it?

“What are you doing right now?”

-I’m cycling.

“Come over to my house.”

-What the heck are you talking about?

“You should come right now. Bada wants to see you.”

-What?

“Are you coming or not? Our parents aren’t at home right now. So come and play with her a little. It’s the holidays and she’s staying at home all the time.”

-Why would I....

"I thought you two were dating?"

-Huh, what the heck is that about?

"You're not? I saw you walking together last time, heck, you were even locking arms."

Dowook fell silent, even though the first thing he would usually do in such situations was to swear.

"Hey, don't chicken out and come. You know where we live, right? I'll give you the address. 30 minutes, then?"

-Do I really have to go?

"Yes, you really have to go."

-I'm really going, okay?

"You should really come, okay?"

He hung up and looked at Bada. She seemed to have heard that he was calling someone as she was looking his way.

"Who is it?"

"Is this the first time you saw me calling someone?"

"Who did you call?"

"Let's respect each other's privacy, okay, young lady?"

"...Alright, so please get started. I'll get into trouble if I don't finish it."

It seemed that the teacher that gave her the homework was a strict one. Bada started focusing on the homework. Had she studied like that usually, she would have gotten great grades. She didn't have a bad head, but she just didn't try.

'Wait, I think I heard that somewhere before.'

Maru smiled and spoke,

"Han Bada."

"What is it?"

"Why don't you go wash yourself? Oh, and change your pants too."

"Ah, why should I? I'm staying at home the whole day. Also, these pants are comfy."

"I think it'll be better if you do. Also, you should tidy your hair a little."

"What are you on about all of a sudden?"

"Dowook is coming over."

"...What?"

"I said Dowook is coming over."

"Who?"

"Kang Dowook."

"WHY!"

When Bada abruptly stood up, Maru pointed at the bathroom for her. After glaring at him and panting for a while, Bada went to the bathroom. Some loud noises could be heard.

"He'll be here in around 30 minutes."

Maru called Dowook. Dowook was panting when he picked up.

"Are you rushing?"

-Why do you ask?

"So you are rushing. When will you be here?"

-Soon!

"Wow, that was quick. Hey."

-Argh, why!

"What do you like about Bada? She's not pretty at all."

-Shut up, and also, I'm in front of your apartment.

"You're here already?"

He went to the veranda and looked down. He saw Dowook who was looking up at the building while sitting on a bicycle. It seemed that he was cycling in a nearby park.

"Bada, Dowook is here."

"Hey! Han Maru! Tell him that he can't come in right now!"

"You're calling your brother by name?"

"Ah, oppa!"

"I'll tell him to take his time, so you can take your time as well. Also, have Dowook help out with your homework. This brother of yours needs to go out for a bit."

The bathroom suddenly opened. Bada, who had shampoo on her hair, was glaring at him as though she was looking at a madman.

"Why would Dowook-oppa do that?"

"Because he and I are friends."

"Goddammit! How can I possibly have him do such a thing?"

“Are you discriminating?”

“You’re so dead. I’m not letting this go.”

“Sure, sure. I get it, so you can continue washing. Mom and dad will be late so there won’t be any problems, right? You two can finish your homework and play around together. Whew, where can you find a better brother than me? I’m even considerate about your love life.”

Bada slammed the door shut. The sound of the shower could be heard for a while before Bada left with her hair wrapped in a towel.

“Is Dowook-oppa here?”

“He’s down there.”

Bada’s face paled. She carefully walked to the veranda and looked down before quickly hiding behind the fence.

“Oh my god! He’s actually here!”

Maru handed her a hair dryer since she was dusting the water off her hair with the towel.

“Take your time.”

“You really are....”

“Dowook came immediately when I talked about you, you know? I mean, I think he had other plans too.”

“R-really?”

“Yeah. I just called him and he was panting. It looks like he came here without rest. Man, someone has it good, with a passionate boyfriend and everything.”

Maru probed Bada out. Bada, who was glaring at him and was about to snap at any moment, shut her mouth and started tidying her hair. So she was a girl despite being so young, huh. Maru took his phone and wallet and left the house. He was able to dodge an annoying matter this time. He took the elevator to the first floor. He saw Dowook locking his bicycle.

“That was quick.”

“I thought you wanted me to come quickly.”

“Looks like the sun will rise from the west tomorrow, I mean, with Kang Dowook listening to another person and all. Hey, wait here for around 10 minutes before going to apartment number 502. No, actually, come with me to the supermarket for a bit.”

He took Dowook to the supermarket. He bought a lot of snacks, drinks, and ice cream for Bada and handed it to Dowook.

“When you go up, tell her that you’re here to help with her homework.”

“Homework?”

“Yeah. Man, Bada has it good, having a boyfriend like you.”

He pushed Dowook’s back when he looked at him with a questioning look. Nothing good would come out of explaining too much. He said ‘don’t cause any accidents’ into the elevator before turning around.

‘Well, people have their own lives.’

Although his sister ended up getting divorced in his previous life, he had to respect her choices.

Life would never flow the same way. Bada would choose what was best for herself. That was why he should just leave it to her to make her decisions. He thought that he should just help out when she thought that she was in the wrong and was in agony. He now knew that life was something that did not go the way he expected.

After standing under the sun for a while, Maru opened his phone.

“Daemyung.”

-Yeah, Maru.

“What are you doing?”

-Watching TV.

“Wanna go boxing?”

-...N-no. The master is too scary.

“Just joking. Let’s go to the jjimjilbang together.”

-Jjimjilbang?

“You have plans?”

-No, it’s not like that.

“Then come. Wash my back for a bit.”

-Haha, alright.

Maru thought that friends were beings that he could go to the public baths with. He decided to have a long talk with him in a warm spring. Also while at it, he thought that he should ask about the drama that Daemyung was helping to create the script.

Maru looked at his house before walking.

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“Haa...”

When he dipped himself in the hot water, he felt much more relaxed and he sighed in relief.

It had been a long time since he last came to the jjimjilbang. Although he went to the public baths a lot when he was young, he didn’t remember going to one ever since he entered elementary school.

“Phew, that’s good.”

Maru sat next to him while sounding like an old man. Daemyung quietly smiled.

“People definitely need warmth.”

“That’s true.”

“How was boxing? The master told me to bring you next time as well.”

Daemyung shook his head as he remembered the master who told him to keep his eyes open all the time.

“Later. Let’s go later.”

“Don’t say that and try going there frequently. You’ll get stronger and bolder as well. Moreover, it’s free.”

“That’s true, but still.”

Delinquents didn’t pick fights with people that looked like they’d strike back. What you need to fix is not the way you fight, but your naive-looking eyes. - that was what he heard when he went to the boxing gym with Maru. The master was definitely a good person who taught with passion, and he thought that he would be able to change himself if he kept going there, but right now, he didn’t have the courage to go there by himself. Actually, he thought that the master was part of the mafia at first. He looked that scary.

“If you change your mind, go make a visit,” Maru said as though he had no intentions of forcing him to go.

After the two sat in the warm spring for a while, the two entered the sauna which was right next to it. Maru, who brought with him a wet towel, flipped the hourglass on the wooden chair.

“Do you want to bet who stays longer? The loser treats the winner to a drink.”

“I’m not sure about anything else, but I am good at enduring.”

Daemyung sat with a confident smile. Sand started flowing down the hourglass like it was rain.

“I heard you were helping with creating the script,” Maru asked.

“It’s not really the script. I’m just helping with the research.”

“Wow, our dear Daemyung has become successful already. You’re a drama writer at your age.”

Daemyung just shrugged his shoulders since he knew that Maru was joking.

“So, how is it?”

“It’s not hard. Like I said, it’s just research. I just look into various books and take out the necessary content and just give it to the writer. But when I helped him out, I realized just how difficult it is to write a script.”

“Is the script you’re helping to write a historical drama?”

“Yeah. It’s going to be airing on RBS. It’s about Han Myung-hoe.”

Hearing that, Maru laughed. The sudden laugh made Daemyung confused.

“The drama I auditioned for is that very one. I received the script yesterday.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. I’m a beggar.”

After being dazed for a while, Daemyung laughed as well. This was a strange coincidence.

“You wrote the script and I’m the actor. I guess we achieved our objective somewhat.”

“Even though I’m just helping with research and you’re a minor role?”

“We can’t be full on the first spoon, can we? It’ll gradually get better as time goes. Although you’re just helping with research and I’m a minor actor, who knows what will happen in ten years? Maybe you’ll be the main writer and I’ll be the main actor.”

“I hope that happens.”

Daemyung wiped the sweat off his face. Maru would definitely become a good actor. He had already signed a contract with a big company, and he kept working as an actor. Once his face became known, he would start getting more important roles, and he might actually become an actor loved by everyone in ten years' time.

‘But what about me?’

Although he found the thing he wanted to do, he still didn’t know if he could continue down that path. The adults always said that there were barely any people who did the thing they liked for a living. Honestly, he didn’t have the confidence to say for sure that he would become a director or a writer and work in the same field as Maru.

“Hey, you can do it,” Maru spoke as though he read his mind.

Although they were simply words of encouragement, Daemyung felt really good.

“Are you going to appear in my work even if you become a famous actor in the future?”

“As long as the work is good and the pay is worth it.”

“No friendship bonus?”

“Maybe once. But you’re going to be someone well-known in ten years too. If you’re still studying under someone else in ten years, you’ll be doing good in twenty years. You’ll be able to afford my pay at least. Also, money problems need to be especially strict when it comes to friends. You know that, right?”

“I know. I just wanted to say that once. I also learned that people need to receive proper compensation for their work.”

“Now that’s something good you’ve learned there. So become a pro and pay me a lot, okay?”

Maru picked up the towel he had around his neck and stood up.

“Daemyung.”

“Yeah?”

“I’ll buy the drink so let’s get out. You’re good.”

“I told you I’m good at enduring.”

Maru shook his head and opened the door. Cool air entered through the gap. Daemyung slowly breathed out the hot air circulating inside him and left.

When he washed his body and went to the waiting room, Maru gave him some sikhye, and in his other hand were some boiled eggs.

“Sikhye and boiled eggs are critical to visiting jjimjilbang.”

“I know right?”

They sat around a table and ate the boiled eggs. This was the first time he came to a jjimjilbang with a friend, but he had fun for no specific reason. Even the man that slept while snoring didn’t annoy him and made him smile.

On the TV was some news about pro golf. Some Korean won some whatever cup for the first time, and the prize was in the hundreds of millions of won. The snoring man suddenly woke up and said ‘that’s enough to pay back my loans’.

“Pros are cool.”

He felt as though the face of the player that took the interview with the prize in his arms shined. Money was one thing, but he was more envious of the fact that he boldly proclaimed his victory. A bold champion always looked cool.

“They look cool because they are as good as they get paid,” Maru said as he scraped the rice grains inside the sikhye cup.

“Is money what separates amateurs from pros?”

“Amateurs receive money to prove their worth, while pros prove their worth according to how much they get paid. But hey, are you not eating that egg? If you aren’t, give it to me.”

Daemyung hurriedly peeled the boiled egg and stuffed it in his mouth.

“Hey, hey. Take it easy.”

Maru giggled and bought some more sikhye.

Daemyung watched the TV as he drank the sikhye with ice in it. Would there come a day where his worth would be proved just like that person?

‘I should prepare myself.’

Proving himself wasn’t something others did for him after all. Chewing the egg in his mouth, Daemyung imagined the far future.

A future where he could have confidence in himself.

* * *

“There are no problems with the actors, right?”

“Yes. Some of the actors have arrived in Mungyeong already. They’re quite earnest, aren’t they?”

“I hope they won’t be late at the very least. Waiting for people on the first day is a sign of bad luck.”

“Should we depart as well?”

“Yeah. But why do you want to bring a car when we can just take the coach?”

“I have places to go when I’m there. Senior, please put your seatbelt on.”

Changsung grabbed the seatbelt and locked it. The vehicle carrying the props was departing as well. Their destination was Mungyeong. The first location for the shoot.

“The war has begun.”

“Indeed.”

Jinhyuk started driving. Changsung looked at the tall RBS building and sighed. From now on, he would have to say goodbye to his home for a while. After he shot all the scenes at the location, he would return to the in-house set and resume shooting. After that, he would have to reserve and shoot in external locations according to the script which he hadn’t received out yet. He would have to alternate between visiting the countryside and coming back to Seoul. Once an accident happened and messed up everyone’s schedule, it would be real hell. All of the staff members might have to adjust their schedule to match an important actor’s. After a couple of incidences of that, he would eventually reach a stage where sleeping comfortably at night would be a godsend.

“I’m going to get some sleep. I need to save up on stamina while I still can.”

“Alright. Once you wake up, you’ll have to keep shooting.”

“Shut up. If things go wrong, I’ll just hand everything to the B team and go missing.”

“Senior, the drama will do horribly if you do that.”

“You’re in charge of the B team and you don’t even have that much confidence?”

“Please stop running away from reality and get some sleep.”

“Alright.”

Changsung put the script booklet that he got from the bindery on the dashboard before closing his eyes. It had been two years since he was last in charge of creating a long-running drama. Although he wasn’t nervous, he had mountains of worries. He was still in his mid thirties, which was considered young in this field. Unlike what his seniors told him where producers required at least ten years of experience before directing their first historical drama, he did his first in his sixth year. The fantasy historical drama he produced while being pressured by the expectations of those around him, produced decent results, but as Changsung inwardly wanted it to do better, he was very disappointed.

Then came his second opportunity. This time, he wanted it to take first place among the programs airing at the same time. Recently, the Wednesday-Thursday dramas produced by RBS kept doing worse than programs from other TV stations. The fact that the president gave them the opportunity to create an in-house drama and even a special season meant the president should have a lot of expectations from them as well. In this era where TV stations outsourced the production of half of its dramas, the proportion of outsourced works would continue to increase if the producer of their own programs did worse.

It wasn't like he would get fired if he did bad, but the problem was that he would be deprived of any opportunities to produce anything in the future and his work responsibilities might change to just simple accounting. These days, the production was mostly handled by producers in outsourcing companies and the resources were provided by the TV stations. From the TV station's perspective, it was satisfactory since they practically got to blow their nose without using their hands, but for the producers that have the ambition to create their own work, they were, unfortunately, losing their reason for entering the company.

"Jinhyuk."

"Yes."

"Let's take first place."

"Of course."

Changsung opened the window slightly and looked outside. Next to the car he was in was the coach with the RBS logo on it.

It had begun. The boring shoot where no one would be at ease, that is.

* * *

Maru looked at the sedan that speeded ahead of the coach. He saw the producer getting in that car before they departed. Was he driving there by himself? If so, then he had to have great stamina.

"Child, you should get some sleep. You'll have a hard time once you go there."

The elderly sitting next to him put on a blindfold before speaking. The people seated in other seats also closed their eyes to get some sleep. Although the coach currently held more than 30 people, it was deadly quiet. If someone made noise, they would receive the glares of others.

Maru quietly took out his script. His role was 'beggar 4'. He was one of the beggars that Han Myung-hoe hung out with when he was young.

"Premature birth."

It was told that Han Myung-hoe was born feeble since young and was destined to be abandoned. In that era, those that were born prematurely were signs of bad luck, while Han Sang-jil, the grandfather of Han Myung-hoe, belonged to a noble household as one of the contributors to the founding of the nation. So, he would probably not be happy that such a person had been born in their household. As such, he was abandoned. However, an old maid would look after him and he would barely survive his infancy. That was the beginning of the drama.

He looked some things up and Han Myung-hoe's early life was indeed very unfortunate. Not only was he an orphan, his younger brother was not accepted by his household either, so he was raised under his great uncle, not his grandfather.

In this work, the beggars were Han Myung-hoe's first friends.

Maru checked the few lines he had. He played the prankster beggar role next to the boss of the beggars, 'Gaeguk'. Han Myunghoe and Gaeguk were the main characters, while he was just part of the background that would make them shine.

"Gee, brother. That dude just came out of a big mansion. He's not someone who'd play with us."

He said his line in a small voice. When he did, the elder said 'child, let's sleep'. Maru apologized to him before closing the script. It seemed that practicing while saying his lines out loud was going to be impossible.

He took out his earphones and put them in before closing his eyes.

He decided to do some image training that wouldn't require producing any sound. Listening to the calming music, Maru started picturing his own version of the beggar.

* * *

"We're here everyone. Please visit the bathroom and wait inside the coach."

A staff member wearing a red cap backwards shouted. The people all got off. Maru was among them.

"The air is good."

"You'll get fed up with the air soon enough."

He listened to the staff's conversation before looking around. The staff members flocked to the cars that parked on the muddy ground. Behind them, a tiled-roof house and a thatched house could be seen. He could also see the ends of a big gate. He wondered if it was a set specifically created for shoots, but from how there were a lot of tourists around, it seemed that it wasn't created by the TV station.

"Let's get things done quickly!"

The staff's shouts could be heard.

Maru watched as dozens of people carried out video equipment before getting into the coach again. It was waiting time, which he was all too familiar with.

Sweet rice drink.

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He returned inside the coach when his phone indicated that it was 9:17.

"Everyone please come out. We'll start doing your makeup."

The people inside the coach all got out. The other people that came out started stretching their arms and looked around. Maru also stretched his shoulders. His shoulders felt a little stiff after sleeping inside the coach.

Next to the coach was a mid-sized van with a Taekwondo academy mark on it. The ones that came out of that van were little kids that looked like they were in elementary school.

“You need to listen to the instructor today, okay?”

“Yes!”

Maru wondered if they were here for the shoot as well since they also walked towards where the makeup vehicle and another coach were waiting. People that seemed to be their parents all followed with camcorders in their hands.

“Please film only in specified areas. There might be problems if the contents of the drama are leaked beforehand, so I ask for your understanding. As for photo time with the actors, we’ll try to prepare a suitable place and time on our side if we get some free time, so please just cheer for the actors if you see them on set. To them, this is their workplace so they might be sensitive. I hope you can cooperate with us.”

When a kind-looking youth politely said that, the parents all smiled and replied yes. While the space with children looked happy and good, the background actors received the leader’s instructions.

“Over there, don’t loiter around and come here.”

A man in his early forties spoke in a low voice. The actors that got off the coach gathered in front of him and moved to the back of the makeup vehicle. The minor actors could be seen among them as well.

“From here to here. You are villagers. From here to here, you guys are travelling merchants. Be careful not to damage the props. I warned you. Also, over there, you two college students. Do you think you’re here to play around? Don’t chat and focus.”

The leader looked at the paper in his hand and gave everyone roles.

“Remember your positions and get back into line once you’re done with your makeup. The shoot will only go smoothly if you move quickly so keep yourselves together at all times.”

Twisted pride could be seen from the way the leader handled himself. Once he left, people got off the makeup vehicle. Women wearing short-sleeved t-shirts opened the cargo area. There were plastic baskets inside, which had name tags on each of them.

“Please come here.”

They took out clothes from the baskets and handed them out for people to wear. When they just scattered those clothes without restraint, the actors hurried as well. After Maru received his clothes, he leaned against the wall of the makeup vehicle and changed. The ladies entered the coach to change their clothes. Although they were in an exposed environment, no one seemed to mind. Everyone just proficiently changed their clothes. Even the female staff were busy checking the costumes. The ones that were embarrassed over exposing their skin were only the youths that didn’t have much experience in the job.

“It’s good that it’s summer.”

“You’re right.”

Two middle-aged men seemed to know each other and exchanged conversations.

The sun was scorching down on them. It was very fortunate that they weren’t shooting a winter scene. If anyone wore thick clothing in this weather where people would sweat doing nothing, they would probably faint from dehydration.

Maru put his nose against the clothes he changed into and sniffed. It seemed to have been washed as there wasn’t any smell. It seemed that the stains and traces of dirt were artificially created. The basket that originally contained the costumes had the word ‘jikryung’ on it. The sleeves were straight and it looked quite good when worn properly, at least for clothing meant for commoners.

After changing clothes, the people gathered in front of the coach again.

“Please line up in twos right here.”

The people lined up into two lines just like the staff instructed them. They checked on each person and redid some people’s jeogori.

“Hm, is this a little small?”

A staff member who tilted her head in front of Maru told Maru to pull up his pants.

“Like this?”

“That looks better.”

After a round of checks, the staff took out straw shoes from another bucket. They seemed to have been made to various sizes. They also seemed to have been used for other dramas as well as some of them had their soles worn out. Though, there was nothing unusable.

“Please be careful not to lose your shoes. There are strings you can pull to tighten the shoes, so don’t let them slip off during shoots, okay?”

Maru tightened his shoes as instructed. The width of the shoes narrowed and it became much more comfortable to wear.

“Beggar roles please come this way.”

He saw a staff member wave in front of the coach. Maru approached that person. He saw the people he saw during the audition.

“We’re now going to do your makeup, so please wait.”

While they got their makeup done one by one, another staff member brought some ruffled hair wigs. It seemed that they were wearing these instead of a topknot wig or a headband to show that they were beggars.

Maru also received a wig. When he put it on, a staff member approached him and adjusted it.

“Don’t touch it.”

“Okay.”

The staff member used some hair gel to make his hair look messy before going over to the next person. Maru took out his phone and took a photo of himself. A man with messy and ruffled hair was looking back at him. He wondered how he would look if he colored himself with some soot, but he decided not to. The makeup artists would probably put some on him if they deemed it necessary.

“Take that off and put this on instead.”

Maru received the clothes that the staff gave him. It looked more like rags than clothes. The jeogori was ash-colored and the pants looked like it was scraped on the ground several times. The staff told him that the jikryung was for the merchants.

He quickly changed his clothes inside the coach before looking down at his body. He looked too much like a beggar. The other beggars all looked at each other and chuckled.

“Alright, that seems good enough.”

The leader of the makeup team snapped her fingers in satisfaction. The staff members all sighed in relief and started their next business.

-Are the beggars ready?

A walkie-talkie sound could be heard. The woman that clicked her fingers said ‘yes, we’re on standby’. A while later, a man holding a walkie-talkie ran to the coach.

“Follow me.”

They followed the man who spoke in a dry tone inside the set. They didn’t move that far from modern paved roads before entering a chosun-era land with earthen ground. Around them was traditional housing with hanja written everywhere. The lights and cameras installed in various places looked out of place.

“You will walk from there to here. Don’t look at the camera.”

The background actors with travelling luggage were going through their movements. The people in this alley alone looked to be more than 50 people. It seemed that there were other coaches that came here. There were travelling merchants wearing straw hats, as well as people wearing bamboo hats on top of a white dupo. There were also people wearing colorful clothing and elderly people wearing gat. A historical street Maru could only see on TV unfolded in front of him.

The other minor actors also subconsciously stopped to look around as well.

“Let’s get moving.”

The man leading the minor actors spoke. Maru stopped looking at the others and started walking. They entered an opening right next to the alley with a lot of people.

“We’re here.”

“Oh, okay.”

The two producers he saw during the audition were there. Their names were Changsung and Jinhyuk, if he remembered correctly. Next to the producer were a boy wearing a white jeogori and a boy wearing tattered clothing as though he was a beggar.

“Uljin, when you talk to Giwoo, use a teasing tone. You know, you want to tease someone if someone’s better off than you, right? But it can’t be too childish. Gaeguk is a beggar but is someone with charisma. That’s how he can lead all the beggars in the area and command them. You must be prankful, but your words should be weighty. Do you get what I mean?”

The boy named Uljin nodded.

‘So he’s Gaeguk, then?’

The boss of the beggars, as well as the friend of Han Myung-hoe in his childhood. Gaeguk would be portrayed as Han Myung-hoe’s closest friend until he meets the Gilchanggun Kwon Ram. Maru could deduce that much from the script of the first and second episode.

‘That means, that one over there is Han Myung-hoe.’

The boy that had his hair neatly combed, Giwoo, nodded as he listened to the producer’s words. As expected of a child actor, his eyes were big and his facial features were very pronounced. Maru thought that he would captivate the hearts of many women in a few years.

Maru leaked a laugh.

‘Why are we so different even though we are both beggars?’

That boy was a pretty beggar, while he was a real beggar. He thought that he had a decent-looking face, but it turned out he really couldn’t beat those that kept receiving massages since young.

“My dear beggars. Come over here.”

Producer Changsung smiled and called out to them. The minor actors all walked towards the producer. Maru was at the very back.

“Well then. You’ll need to stay together during shoots in the future. This is Lee Uljin. He’s the boss of the beggars, so treat him well.”

Lee Uljin politely clasped his hands and greeted. The minor actors did the same.

“This is our Han Myung-hoe, named Kang Giwoo.”

“Hello.”

Kang Giwoo greeted them first with a clear voice.

What a nice voice - Maru thought as he nodded.

“Let’s see. First, you need to have your face re-done. Also, your wig is tilted. Do it again.”

The man that led the actors here called the makeup team through the walkie-talkie.

“Let’s try standing.”

Uljin stood at the center, and the minor actors made a semi-circle behind him.

“Good, no one pops out. Can you all try smiling?”

“That’s fine. Also... that brownie. Hey, Jinhyuk. What was his name again?”

“Han Maru.”

“Ah, right. The one named Han Maru, raise your hand.”

Maru was a bit confused when his name was called out but still raised his hand.

“It’s you? Wow, I didn’t recognize you because of all that makeup. You look good.”

Producer Changsung gave him a script that he got from Jinhyuk.

“I’ll give you some time. Look at it and memorize it.”

Maru didn’t say anything and opened the script. This script was different from the one he received a few days ago. Some of the lines for the beggars, that were always expressed by ‘Gaeguk’ and ‘beggars’ had changed to include a few lines for ‘2nd beggar’.

“How is it? You think you can do it?”

Hearing Changsung’s question, Maru replied without question.

“Yes, I can.”

“Good. You’ll be the boss when we shoot just the beggars. As for Gaeguk, he’ll appear in two-shots more often with Han Myung-hoe.”

Changsung patted his shoulders before turning around. Maru sat down on the spot and opened the script and started reading. It wasn’t just the names that were changed. Some of the lines had changed as well.

Amidst the busily-moving staff, Maru was absorbed in the script.

“That’s not how you beg... don’t hide it and give it to me... that’s not right... yes, that’s right...”

He tried saying the lines before closing his eyes. He imagined a beggar that looked like him in his head and had him speak those lines. Watching the virtual acting in his mind, he changed the parts that looked awkward before playing the scene again. After deeming that it was good enough, Maru opened his eyes again and read the script.

“Here, these two will hold a conversation, and you guys will come in from there. The second beggar will be at the front.”

Maru raised his head while reading the script. Jinhyuk was explaining to the minor actors their movement lines. There wasn’t any consideration for him around here. If he wanted to listen to something, he had to do it while he still could. Maru stood up with the script and listened to Jinhyuk’s explanation. After that, he sat back down again and started reading the script.

“Well then. Let’s get ready. Get the props organized. Director Kwon. Can we start the shoot?”

“I was ready 10 years ago.”

“As expected of director Kwon. There’s no one that can win against your humor among the camera directors. I hope you can shoot our actors well with the new camera.”

Producer Changsung walked towards the monitor. Maru heaved a deep sigh before putting the script where the staff was standing. His mind contained the lines already. He couldn’t say that he was perfect with 100% confidence, but he wouldn’t make any absurd mistakes at least.

He could hear some noise from the monitor.

“Scene 14. The beggar den in the shopping area.”

That signalled the start of the shoot. The minor actors all moved off to the side and waited for their time. For now, only Giwoo and Uljin were on the camera. Silence pervaded the noisy area. After around 3 seconds, the two child actors for the main characters started speaking.

The top of traditional garments.

Chapter 394

“You’re looking down on me too, aren’t you?”

“Young master. There’s no way a beggar like me will dare look down on you, is there? How could I look down on young master when I get by everyday by begging? Don’t you think so?”

“You still dare to.”

“If you want to hit me, then go ahead. Instead, stick a grain of rice on your hand so that I can get some food.”

Uljin played the role of Gaeguk, who liked to poke fun at people. Giwoo, who played the role of the young Han Myung-hoe, grabbed Uljin’s collar and snorted.

“Cut! Let’s do that again.”

Producer Changsung stood up from where the monitor was and stood in front of the two child actors. The veteran producer consoled the two child actors and clearly told them what they had to do.

“Both of you are doing okay, but we’re currently doing a close-up shot. I want your expressions to be more vivid. Do you get what I mean? Both of you are too focused on your voices, so the scene looks too bland.”

“Okay.”

After producer Changsung walked away, and they reset the camera, they started shooting again. They were shooting the same scene for the fifth time now. Although the actors did the same act several times over, the camera shot at different angles each time. One would shoot Giwoo’s face, one would shoot Uljin’s, and then they would take another shot at an angle so that both of their faces could be seen, and so on.

The person in charge of the camera focus seemed to have finished adjusting the lens as the camera director gave a signal. The shoot resumed. It seemed to go well this time, but a person jumped up from behind the fence on the other side of the camera and took a photo. He was a boy that looked to be in high school.

“Hey, over there!”

One of the staff shouted and ran towards the fence. The two child actors that were absorbed in their roles scratched their heads before returning to their original positions.

“Geez, why can’t they just cooperate with us,” the staff standing right next to Maru spoke.

This person was in charge of the props. When the good flow was broken due to a prank, people started sighing here and there. The staff that chased the student came back while shaking his head. It seemed that he missed the boy.

“Let’s not mind too much about it and start shooting ag...”

Just as producer Changsung was about to console the child actors, the sound of an aeroplane could be heard this time. The acoustics staff holding a boom mic in the air shrugged his shoulders and lowered it for a moment.

“Looks like there are already signs that our drama will be hugely successful. Getting a lot of distractions on the first shoot is a sign that the work will be successful.”

Hearing the producer’s words, the actors and the staff all laughed. Changsung soothed the atmosphere like the conductor of an orchestra. Changsung just showed how much of a difference the producer makes.

“Let’s try that again.”

The disturbance was gone and the aeroplane had gone away. A faint light shone upon the quiet beggar den once again. The cameras started rolling and the acoustics engineer adjusted various equipment. After checking on all of them the producer gave a cue sign again, and the child actors started acting again.

Maru watched the act for a while before taking a step back and opening the script. It seemed that there was still quite some time until the rest of the beggars would appear in the story. Although producer Changsung’s speech was soft, his requests were very on-point.

He was going back and forth between pages when he felt a gaze on him. When he looked next to him, he saw a girl looking at the script in his hands with round eyes. He remembered the girl’s name. It was Kim Bitna.

“Wanna see it?”

Seeing her nod, he passed the script over to her. Despite the fact that she was only at the age where she would have just entered elementary school, she read the script very composedly. Perhaps she had what it took to become a star one day.

Maru looked around him. He saw a woman wearing sunglasses outside the set. She was Bitna's mother who drove off in a cool manner last time. He met eyes with her once, and she greeted him first with a nod. She was probably telling him to take care of her daughter. Maru nodded back.

"Well, let's flip it now."

Hearing the producer's words, the lights and equipment located behind Giwoo moved to behind Uljin.

"Wow, they're shooting again?"

A small voice could be heard. It seemed that this was the first time witnessing a shoot for one of the staff members. Maru also laughed during his first time out of absurdity. On TV, it was at most a minute-long scene, but it took several hours to shoot such a short scene. When he didn't know, he thought that the scene was taken at multiple angles at once with multiple cameras, but in reality, there were only a few cameras and the same scene was shot several times. The same lines were said over and over again, and once the background changed or it felt somewhat off from the previous shoot, the shoot would pause, the background would be reset and then they would start shooting again. It was the pinnacle of repetition.

"We're going to take a close-up shot of your hands when you grab his collar. You don't need to make it look shaky. Your hands will shake by themselves if you clench hard enough."

After the shoot ended, producer Changsung called for the minor actors. The eight beggars, including Maru, stood in front of Changsung.

"It's almost lunch time, so let's get this done quickly. Beggars 1 and 2 will stand next to the 2nd beggar and talk to each other as they come in. Then, you quickly rush to the two main characters when you see them grabbing each other by the collar. Exaggerate yourselves. Think of it as if your house is on fire."

After engraving producer Changsung's orders into their minds, the group was moved to the outside of the opening. While the rail cameras were being set up, producer Jinhyuk approached Maru.

"The focus is on you."

"Okay."

Producer Jinhyuk nodded to the camera director before speaking to the minor actors.

"You will start walking from there and come all the way here, and find that Gaeguk is grabbed by the collar. The cut only ends when you run all the way here so bear that in mind."

Maru looked at the line that Jinhyuk drew with his foot and replied 'yes'.

"Let's go over our lines once."

He went over the lines with the people that played beggars 1 and 2. The context was that they received a lot of leftover party food due to luck. They walked forward while exchanging a conversation. After they made sense of what they had to do, they returned to their starting positions.

"Let's do this."

Maru spoke to the other minor actors. They were all around his age or were younger than him. Since they were minor actors, the shoot should end easily as long as they didn't make a huge mistake.

After all the equipment was set up, producer Changsung signalled them to get ready. After looking at the camera once, Maru calmed down his breathing. There was a boom mic above his head. The shoot was about to begin now.

'Lines are uttered out, not spoken out.'

Since he was a beggar, there was no need to put weight into his words. Drawing the picture of a beggar that producer Changsung asked from Uljin, he stretched his chin lightly. He saw producer Changsung grab the walkie talkie with his hand as he sat in front of the monitor. Producer Changsung looked at them with a relaxing smile before raising his hand to his eye level and shouting 'things are looking good, cue when you're ready!'.

He grinned and started walking, starting with his right foot. He was holding a rice ball that the props team gave him and walked towards the opening. His footsteps were light, and his shoulders were moving up and down as though he was about to start humming. The curved lips, and the matching eyes. He put thought into every bit of his action as he moved. Unless he reached a stage where he could do all that reflexively, he would have to put a lot of effort into controlling his emotions so that unnecessary expression and emotion didn't leak out from him. If he could not restrain his emotions, it would either look exaggerated or just plain awkward. To express his emotions so that it didn't look out of place, he had to know how to rule over each strand of his emotions. If that was impossible, then restraint was the basics of acting.

'Instructor Miso's words are worth listening to.'

He just had to show a beggar that looked cheerful. Any more than that was a waste, and the producer wouldn't want that either.

"I wish every day was like today."

"Yeah. I also wish there were parties every day."

"Look at this! I also got pumpkin candy!"

Beggar 2 showed off his pumpkin candy and spoke. That was an exaggerated action that wasn't there during the rehearsal.

Maru perked up his ears. Fortunately, he didn't hear the producer's voice. Maru reacted to that act in a way that wouldn't look too out of place.

"Good for you~."

He took the pumpkin candy from beggar 2 with a teasing voice. It seemed that it was okay until this point. The line that Jinhyuk drew entered his eyes. As Maru placed his foot on top of the line, he turned his face to look at the opening. He saw their captain being grabbed by the collar. He was a thankful younger brother who solved the meals for the beggars around here with his smarts and talent in speech. When he thought of it like that, anger started rushing into his head.

"Hey, you!"

He shouted and started running. The other minor actors also shouted 'hey!' before following him. As they took around five to six steps, producer Changsung shouted cut.

"Good, you did well. But can you come here for a moment?"

Maru and the two minor actors stood in front of producer Changsung.

"That was good, but since you rushed out forward, I couldn't get any shots of the two of you since your heads got in the way of each other. Like that, the viewers wouldn't know who is talking. It means that it would look awkward."

The guy playing beggar 2 apologized.

"Don't feel so down. You did good. You did good, but I'm telling you to do at least what we agreed on. Oh, and 2nd beggar."

"Yes."

"Can you...."

Producer Changsung narrowed his eyes and pointed at the rice ball in Maru's hands before speaking.

"Can you do the same thing while eating that?"

Maru looked at the rice ball in his hand.

"If it's edible, I will."

"Are your hands clean?"

"Yes."

"Hey, make a rice ball!"

One of the people that followed Jinhyuk around all the time ran towards the props team. A while later, he returned with a rice ball on a tray. The rice ball was made with white rice, powdered laver, and some vegetables. Maru liked how it looked decently dirty.

"That looks good. 2nd beggar, here you go."

He grabbed the warm rice ball.

"Try saying your line while eating it."

Maru nodded his head and took a big bite. He was supposed to be a beggar. There was no need for him to cover his mouth and laugh like a noble lady or something. He just munched on some rice before saying his line when producer Changsung signalled him to.

"I wish every day was like today."

Although grains of rice got stuck below his tongue and in his gum, his pronunciation was on point. As the tone of speech wasn't that strong, there weren't any difficulties speaking while eating.

"Walk around and try saying your next line."

His next line was the stretched out line. He would drag out the words 'good for you' and emphasize the 'you' at the end. Unlike the first line, it was likely that he might end up spitting out some of the rice grains in his mouth. Maru walked and said his line upon the director's signal after taking another bite.

"Good for you~."

The moment he said that some rice popped out of his mouth. Maru quickly received the grains with his left hand and made a sucking sound to put them back in his mouth. Then, he started walking again as though nothing had happened.

"That. Do exactly that."

Producer Changsung smiled and went back to his position. Maru grabbed the new rice ball that the staff gave him and stood at his starting position. After exchanging glances with the other minor actors, he waited for the producer's signal.

"Well, then. Cue!"

Producer Changsung's voice could be heard.

* * *

Changsung crossed his arms and looked at the monitor. The group of beggars were walking forward. Seeing the beggar at the front smile in a joyous manner, Changsung smiled as well.

"He's good."

"He sure is."

Jinhyuk agreed with him from the side. Yes, the lead and supporting actors were the most important in a drama. It was especially the case since actors with frightening skills could resuscitate a crappy script and a doomed direction. What was next then? Changsung believed that it was the background.

Even among the background elements, he thought that the background created by people was the most important. The minor actors, without knowing the importance of those people, who didn't even have that many lines, one could not call himself a director. It was the sum of the images of such minor characters that created the atmosphere of the era. The minor roles were in charge of transferring what the people were like in the era that the drama was set in to the viewers.

They could be considered to have done their full jobs just by appearing on screen, and they were even good at saying their lines? He couldn't help but praise them.

"Good for you~."

That shamelessness of just sucking back in the rice that popped out of his mouth without overreacting was just great. If he hurriedly sucked in the rice as though it was such a waste, Changsung would have told him to tone down his act, but that boy restrained himself as though he knew that already. Even while restraining himself, he showed the necessary parts as he walked forward.

It seemed that he had thought about how he would be portrayed on the camera.

There was a common saying among the actors in this field. The camera shows what is not seen. The screen, for some curious reason, showed the effort, passion, and amount of practice that the actors had. It turned those values into numbers and allowed the viewers to evaluate the actors.

After the camera shot up to the point where they were about to rush ahead, Changsung shouted cut.

"I guess we don't need to do that again."

They got a satisfactory cut on the second shoot.

Chapter 395

"You're about to push him away, but you are shocked when you see the shoes Han Myung-hoe is wearing. You walk backwards in surprise and fall down. Han Myung-hoe will stare at the 2nd beggar who fell down and then follow Gaeguk. Keep that in mind and keep the flow."

After explaining things to the people standing in front of him, he walked back to the monitor.

"I thought it would take a long time, but it looks like things will end unexpectedly early," Jinhyuk spoke as he looked at his watch.

"We might be able to eat lunch before 1 at this rate. Who's coming today?"

"Foodmom."

"That place is decent. One of the ones I had before was horrible. Heck, I would do better than them."

"I recently heard that that place went out of business. One of my friends work for YBS, and apparently, they had long since dropped all deals with them due to bad rumors."

"That it tastes horrible?"

"That's one of them, but...," saying that, Jinhyuk lowered his voice.

"The one running the food company is the little brother of someone who ran with the funds for a movie production."

"I think I saw that on the news before. A twelve billion-won movie being stopped."

"It's probably that same one. I heard that there were a lot of individual investors. Man, they all got screwed."

Jinhyuk clicked his tongue.

"That just makes me think that saving up money in your bank is the way to earn money. If you end up investing in things like stocks, you won't even get your money back," Changsung spoke as he remembered his salary bank account.

He once turned away a good friend of his, who tried to persuade him to invest in something with him, but not long after that, he heard that that friend went out of contact. He just ran after the place he invested into went out of business. Ever since then, he despised any form of investment.

"Ooh, senior. It looks like you saved up some money, huh?"

“Why do you ask?”

“To have you treat me to a meal. I heard that there’s a beef BBQ restaurant nearby.”

“Hell no.”

Changsung stopped the conversation and looked at the monitor. Despite being young, the actors all looked very serious. They looked like soldiers prior to a battle.

“Relax, you’re doing good.”

Hearing Changsung’s voice, the child actors all eased their expressions. It seemed that the conversation he had with Jihyuk was giving them misunderstandings.

“I think that one is talented. I never saw him nervous. It shouldn’t be that he’s used to it, right?”

Jinhyuk pointed at one of the kids on the monitor. The 2nd beggar. Changsung nodded.

Unlike the others, he showed leisure. Even the child actors for the lead roles were showing signs of nervousness, yet that boy was easing up others by talking to them.

“Thanks to him, I think we can finish early.”

The viewers did not forgive awkward acting just because the actor was young. The moment someone entered the camera frame, they had to show a complete act regardless of age.

However, no matter how good a child actor was, they were bound to lack compared to the adult actors who had widened their scope with years of experience. It wasn’t an easy feat for the young actors to fill that gap.

This was why suitable direction was needed in order to lessen that disparity. Child actors would usually shoot with other child actors, and the scenes they had to shoot with adult actors were shortened in length as much as possible.

Despite all that effort, the shooting time would stretch out endlessly when working with a child actor who had a shallow understanding of acting. Fortunately, the child actors this time were all doing well, which made Changsung relieved. It was especially good that there were no mistakes while shooting the minor actors since it meant that he could solely focus on the lead actors.

Changsung gave a cue signal. The 2nd beggar who ran to the opening from the street blocked Giwoo. He was following the instructions Changsung gave him during the rehearsal very accurately.

“Who are you to cause a ruckus?”

His tone was very memorable. He was quite calm and composed during their conversation, so it seemed that he had done a lot of research. The 2nd beggar and the other beggars who were about to corner Giwoo, flinched when they looked at the shoes he was wearing. They scanned him from top to bottom in a suspicious manner before realizing what they did. The second beggar walked a few steps back before falling on his butt.

At that moment, Changsung subconsciously spoke ‘whoa’ in a small voice. That was because it looked as though he actually fell over and not intentionally. Only after the 2nd beggar paled and hid behind Uljin

did he realize that it was part of an act. He thought that the boy would just sit down after taking a few steps back, but it even looked painful to those watching. He clearly looked flustered for having touched the son of a noble, and Changsung was able to shout cut in a joyous manner.

“Hey, 2nd beggar! Is your ass okay?”

“Yes. It’s fine.”

He returned to a composed boy from a rather lacking beggar that followed Gaeguk. He was dusting off his butt, and the minor actors around him seemed worried about him. Giwoo, who stood opposite to him, seemed quite surprised as his eyes were widened. If the camera shot Giwoo, they would’ve gotten an NG.

Changsung stood up and walked towards the child actors.

“Are you really okay?”

“Yes. I fell over moderately, so I’m not hurt.”

“That’s good, then. But still, don’t try too hard. It’ll be on us if an accident occurs on set. Safety is always first. Understand?”

“Yes. I will bear that in mind.”

“But rather than that. Do you do some sports or something?”

“I’m learning action acting.”

“Oh, really now?”

Changsung stroked his chin. This guy was becoming more and more decent the more he looked into him.

“Hey, you came here through the audition right? The general audition.”

“Yes.”

“I think you are fit for this job, so try aiming to be an actor. If you show your face here and there, you’ll attract some attention. Well, it’s hard to enter an agency these days, but those that will, will do so sooner or later.”

The 2nd beggar replied after some time. There was an awkward smile on his face. Was he embarrassed because he was complimented? It seemed that he was still a kid after all.

“We still need to get a few more cuts, so let’s keep going.”

After returning to his spot, Changsung signalled the sound engineer and the camera director.

* * *

“Wow.”

Someone exclaimed from the side.

"It looks good," Maru spoke as he picked up a plate.

When he heard that it was time for lunch, he thought that he would receive a lunch box, but there was a buffet waiting for him instead. There were skewers, which were a hassle to make, to meat dishes, sandwiches, and even bibimbap.

"Have a good meal."

A man wearing a white bandana handed out some drinks. He had heard before, that historical dramas had a lot of production budget, and it turned out that even the food was different. He stuffed his plate full of food before sitting on a mat laid out on the ground.

"I'm definitely going for seconds after this."

"I'm definitely getting more than I'm getting paid from this."

The minor actors, who had stayed together for half a day, had become close. Bitna, the youngest, went to meet her mom during break times before joining them. She was at an age where she would be more at ease with her mother rather than strangers, so he felt somewhat proud and worried that she decided to join them.

"Eat a lot, Bitna."

"Yes."

She replied very courteously as well. Bitna had become a small star that was doted on by the minor actors and the staff. No one could hate her since she politely greeted everyone she came across. Even producer Changsung, who walked by, told Bitna to have a good meal.

"Hyung. Did you learn acting?"

A boy that was a year younger than him asked. Apparently, his dream was to become an actor.

"A little bit."

"At an academy?"

"That too, and I learn at school as well. You know, club activities."

"My school doesn't have an acting club."

"That's too bad. It's good to try it out. There might be local cultural centers running public acting teams, so try looking into that. Standing on stage always helps."

"Ooh. Okay, I'll try looking into that."

"You really should."

The three people next to him said that they decided to participate after finding an audition notice at their respective academies. It seemed that everyone here was preparing themselves to achieve the goal that was to become an actor.

Seeing them, Maru thought that there were quite a lot of students that aspired to become actors. On one hand, he was envious of their challenging youthful mindset, and on the other hand, he pitied them since most of them would fail to become one and regret it later on in their lives. Of these people, how many of them would he continue to see in TV stations, or at shoots?

‘...I’m just a moth as well. Who am I worrying about?’

Moths were bound to be attracted to lights shining down on the streets late in the night. They fly to the lights to admire the light, but most of them would circle around it for a while, then fall down and die. The ones that dance with the light and return to their habitats were few and far in between.

Even if they endure in order to survive, they would die once they were swept away by strong winds or the rain. The thing called environment sometimes makes effort look tragic.

However, there were definitely those that rose despite the interference from their environment. The ones that flapped their wings harder than others. There were those that did not get swept by the wind or the rain and strove towards the light.

“Let’s practice a lot so that we don’t get left behind. It’s such a pity to fail due to the wrong reasons.”

The other child actors, who were all younger than him, nodded their heads and raised their spoons. That was right. Food was stamina.

Scooping a big mouthful, Maru looked at the parasol that stood afar. The main actors and the main staff members were there. Although people said that the era had changed and there was no more hierarchy, those who lived long enough all knew - that the height where their spoons lay was different.

A stable income or a big one-time income. Those that picked up their spoons at that height would be able to achieve one of the two.

Minor and lead actors.

Although the difference was only one word, the gap between them was vast.

After emptying his plate, he went for seconds and came back with his plate full again. The others looked at him in a weird light.

“You should eat now. You’ll be hungry if you keep waiting.”

Hearing the word ‘waiting’, the others stood up as well and went to get more. It seemed that they were aware of what ‘waiting’ entailed.

After eating their fill, the minor actors had to wait for a while since the main actors started shooting. They ran out of topics to talk about so all of them just watched the set without saying a word.

After they waited until it was around 1 hour away from sunset, a staff member approached them, who were desperate to hear the words ‘let’s get to work’.

“Change your clothes and join them.”

At the place the staff member pointed to were people wearing merchant outfits. It seemed that they were going to shoot a crowd scene now.

Maru took off the beggar clothing and wore a clean dopo. His role was to eat some candy in front of the candy store.

'Man, they're juicing us.'

Apparently, his next role was that of a corpse. He had heard about borrowing money to pay another debt, but in this case, he was hired for several different roles. Maru just shrugged and started eating the square-shaped pumpkin candy.

It was very sweet.

He chewed on the candy while looking at the sun that was slowly starting to set.

* * *

"You're here."

Changsung greeted Yoon Moonjoong, who got out of the car with a kind smile.

"It's been a long time since I came here. Oh, take this."

"Oh, thank you for all this."

He shared the drinks that Moonjoong gave him with the staff. Moonjoong always had the habit of handing out food during his shoots. It was to the point that some actors said that they would gain weight when working with him.

"Is the shoot going well?"

"Yes. Everything's going extremely well."

"That's good to hear. I was a little worried since it's the first shoot."

"The actors were very cooperative. Oh, please come here. All the actors are together right now."

While he walked across the set with Moonjoong, the staff members that recognized Moonjoong quickly got up and greeted him. The great senior of the industry replied to each one of them as he walked. Before he arrived at the parasol where the actors were waiting, Moonjoong stopped for a bit. His gaze was headed to the minor actors and the background actors, who were in a group of their own.

"Is there a problem?"

"No, I was just wondering if he was doing well."

"He?"

"There's a kid I know."

"Who?"

"Over there, him."

Moonjoong moved his chin to indicate someone, but there were too many people in the group for Changsung to figure out who Moonjoong was referring to.

“Let’s go.”

“Ah, yes.”

He followed Moonjoong and looked at the group of people again, but he still couldn’t figure out who Moonjoong was indicating. He wondered for a while before shaking his head and forgetting about it. If he was supposed to pay attention to that person, Moonjoong would have told him to do so already. From how he just walked past without making a big deal about it, perhaps that person wasn’t that important to Moonjoong either.

‘If something happens, he’ll tell me.’

Changsung led Moonjoong to the other actors.

Chapter 396

“It’s hot.”

“It sure is.”

Just sitting in the shade was not cool enough. Although the beginning of autumn was behind them, there was no autumn to be seen. Feeling fooled by the small words printed on the calendar, Maru wiped the sweat off his forehead.

“I wonder when this will end.”

A minor actor younger than him asked in a tired voice. After they shot the crowd scene after lunch, they’ve been waiting ever since. Even the ones that were excited about seeing actors in real life calmed down and just watched the shoot in a daze after around an hour or so.

“Hyung, do we always have long waiting times like this?”

A boy with a big nose asked. Maru nodded.

“If you’re unlucky, you might not do anything for three hours and just go home.”

“I was overjoyed that I was supposed to be a minor actor, but like this, we’re no different from background actors.”

“That’s because we’re minor roles without much significance. But we still do get to appear on camera a lot, right? Unless they cut it out during editing, you’ll appear on TV. Take consolation from that.”

“There’s all this stuff on my face. Would anyone even recognize me?”

He sighed as he slightly smudged the black makeup on his face.

“At least it’s better than the passersby who go by unnoticed.”

“That’s true, but still. Ah, the wait is too long. We are actors too.”

The boy that grumbled took some others to the bathroom. The shade became quiet. Maru fanned himself with the fan that the staff left with him. The soft wind brushed past his sweat. For a brief moment, he felt better.

“Aren’t you hot?” Maru asked Bitna, who sat next to him.

She could have waited in her mom’s car with air conditioning, but she did not leave the rest of the group during breaks. Her mom couldn’t be seen around. It seemed that she only watched when Bitna was on camera.

“I’m okay,” Bitna replied.

Despite being so young, she was very calm and composed. She looked cute and looked like she would act like a child, but she waited very calmly without making a single complaint. Maru faintly smiled and started fanning her. When he fanned her, Bitna thanked him with a bow.

“Isn’t it hard?”

“I’ll do it even if it’s hard.”

“Haha, I’m not telling you to not do it.”

Bitna stared at him.

“What is it?”

“Is it hard for you, ahjussi?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Then do your best.”

“Okay, I’ll do my best.”

He was trying to cheer her up, but he was encouraged instead. Bitna looked around the set with a serious expression. Maru wondered what her upbringing was like.

“Grab tight from both sides! Don’t loosen your hand! If you feel like you can’t endure, just shout!”

Six large men surrounded a palanquin. When the six lifted it up at the same time, they all said that they were okay.

“I’ll try going on it.”

Even after a staff member got in it, the palanquin was stable. After checking various things, the staff seemed to be convinced of its safety as he brought one person.

“Step on this to go in.”

The one that got on the palanquin was an elderly man who had a big build. He was probably the actor playing Han Sang-jil, the grandfather of Han Myung-hoe.

‘Park Moosung. He’s quite popular on historical dramas.’

From what Maru heard, he was appearing as a cameo. It was likely that the producer or the writer asked him to feature in the shoot. He would be portrayed as the cruel man who tells his family to abandon Han Myung-hoe after finding out that he was born prematurely.

The palanquin was raised according to the staff's signal. Although it slightly tilted towards the right at first, it soon gained balance. Park Moosung laughed heartily and apologized to everyone for being so heavy.

"We'll do this quickly!" Changsung shouted.

The people lifting the palanquin up slowly moved forward. Moosung, who was inside, quickly became composed. He laid back on the backrest and watched the people outside doing business with a bored expression. His posture indicated his status.

When the palanquin passed in front of a hanok surrounded by a stone fence, Moosung said 'stop'. The low voice reached even where Maru was resting. He definitely sounded different to when he was speaking to the staff members just now. It was heavy yet spread far. The sound was vivid until the very end.

They got a satisfying cut in one go. Moosung got off the palanquin and took off his gat. A woman that seemed to be his stylist quickly approached him and received the jacket and the hat from him.

Producer Changsung disappeared from the set along with Moosung. Producer Jinhyuk was in control of the set now.

"Everyone please gather round!"

The background actors, as well as the minor actors for the beggars, all gathered round. Producer Jinhyuk scanned their faces and body figures before picking a few people and telling them to stand to the side.

"The ones standing to my right, please get ready for the street scene, and as for the rest of you, I'll have you become corpses."

Maru was one of the corpses. Ten men of various heights left the streets and moved to the road where there were straw-roofed houses around. This was where the convenience store was, so there were a lot of tourists.

"I think they're shooting a drama here."

"Where?"

People flocked after seeing cameras and lights and asked the staff which actors were appearing. The staff replied to them that they were just extras in a tired manner.

Those words worked wonders. The flock of people scattered like it couldn't be a lie. The word 'extras' was magical. Maru laughed in a low voice before walking.

"Please lie down and cover yourselves with this."

They lied down under the roof hanging off the side of the straw-roofed house in a line. The cold sensation from the ground made his body scream in joy. He felt that he might be able to fall asleep here. The others looked the same. Some of them almost fell asleep.

When they waited like that, Uljin and Giwoo arrived. This was the scene where Giwoo was scared out of his wits when he saw Uljin rummaging through the dead bodies.

Uljin approached and stepped on the hand of someone here. He was the man right next to Maru. Uljin flinched in surprise, but the man didn't even groan. If Uljin continued acting, he would be portrayed as the one who boldly started rummaging through dead bodies, but still had his childish side. Unfortunately, though, Uljin could not continue his act.

"Cut. Are you okay?"

Producer Jinhyuk asked. As the alleyway was narrow, he couldn't come in and he just stood in front of the camera.

"Yes. I'm fine. You can continue."

The man who seemed to be over forty just laughed and told them not to worry about it before lying back down.

At that moment, Maru saw that the man frowned as he grabbed the hand that was stepped on.

There was no way it didn't hurt. Uljin might be quite skinny for a teen, but a boy in his late teens stepped on the man's hand with all of his body weight. It wouldn't be strange even if the man's bones broke.

Feeling Maru's gaze, the man put his index finger against his mouth and shook his head. He was telling Maru not to say it. Seeing the hurried movement, Maru made a bitter expression and could only nod back.

"Are you okay?" Uljin asked.

The man said that there were no problems with a cheerful voice. Though, his words trembled at the end. Uljin apologized before returning to his starting point.

"It hurts, doesn't it?"

"Nah, I'm fine."

"You look like you're in pain though."

"I'm fine, I'm fine."

"But still, you should visit the information center after the shoot. They should have some first-aid kits."

"I was planning to do that. Thanks for worrying about me, kid."

The sweat on the man's forehead was probably not entirely due to the heat of the weather.

When Uljin started rummaging through the corpses, Giwoo entered and tried to stop him. Maru couldn't open his eyes, so he didn't know what kind of an act they were putting on, but they sounded a little awkward to him, since he had just heard a powerful deep voice from Moosung.

"Cut. Thanks for your work."

The shoot finished in three shoots. Standing up with the tattered rag, Maru looked at the face of the man who lied down next to him. He was sweating cold sweat.

“I’ll return it for you.”

“Thanks....”

The man covered up his right finger, which was stepped on, with his left hand and stood up. Maru narrowed his eyes and approached the staff with the two rags.

“Uhm, I think I sprained my fingers a little when I lied down. Can I get some pain relief patches?”

“Patches? Are you hurt?”

“No. It just stings a little.”

The staff scratched his head before telling him to wait and turned around with the rags. Maru returned to the alley and sat next to the man.

“Did you go?”

“Huh? Oh, yeah. But they didn’t have any.”

The man frowned.

“I asked a staff member to get some patches.”

“What? You shouldn’t have.”

“I said that I was the one injured. I also said that it was just a slight sprain, so it won’t enter the ears of anyone important.”

“...Really?”

“Let me have a look at your hand.”

The man slowly extended his hand. Thankfully, it was just a bit swollen. With enough rest after applying the patches, it looked like he would be okay in two days.

He received spray-type pain relief from the staff and gave it to the man. Tssssh. The spray gave off a refreshing smell. The man, who was spraying it on himself, fanned his hands to get rid of the smell. At the same time, he peeked outside. He looked very uneasy.

“There’s no one outside.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. I checked before coming. So you can be at ease.”

“Thanks for being so considerate.”

Although he smiled and said that he was okay, he was very careful with applying the pain relief.

Maru sighed a little and blocked him so that no one could see him. Even if a staff member came by, they wouldn’t notice the man.

Seeing him look after his wound in the corner, Maru felt bitter. It was likely that this was his job. A job that didn’t require specific skills meant that it was just as easy to replace someone like him. The moment

the leader found out about his injury, he would tell the man to 'get some rest', and as someone whose everyday expenses depended on the job, those words would be cruel and merciless.

When he saw the man who had to swallow the pain and protect himself with his words, Maru was reminded of his father, who was forced to rest due to an accident at the factory he was working at in his later years. He had barely any memory of what happened 'back' then, but the frustration and the sorry feelings he had when watching his father's dejected shoulders as the eldest son in the house still remained in a corner of his heart.

"Boy. I'm really okay."

The man smiled for a while before cringing again. Maru nodded before standing up.

"Please be careful."

"Y-yeah."

Maru took the pain relief spray and left the alley. He looked for the man who gave him the spray to return it, but he couldn't be seen anywhere. He couldn't shoot with the spray in hand, and the props vehicle wasn't that far, so he decided to go there and return it.

When he walked on the streets, people around him looked at him with curiosity. It wasn't a surprise since he was dressed up like a beggar. On his way back from returning the spray, he met the man again. However, the leader was standing right next to him. The leader waved at the man to go, who bowed with an apologetic expression.

Maru watched as the leader turned around and the man stood still. Then, he met eyes with the man. The man stretched his fingers out and smiled as though to show that he was fine. Maru felt that there was a thousand tons of weight on the man's shoulders as the man turned around.

Was he found out? Or did he report himself since he thought that it was serious? In any case, the leader would henceforth remember the man's name. In the field, the one that caused the accident would be remembered in a bad way. What was funny was that the one that was caught in the accident would also be remembered in a bad way.

After watching the man for a while, he started walking again. Although there was a bitter taste in his mouth, he had to do what he had to. He visited the bathroom before he went back to the set. After washing his hands, he looked in the mirror. His face, which was drenched in heat and sweat, looked like a real beggar.

Just as he was about to leave after shaking the water off his hands, he heard a voice outside.

"I told you. But man, he really couldn't say a word like you said. I really stepped on it like I meant it, but he smiled back and said he was fine. Hey, I even pitied him a little. Would he really want to live like that at his age? If I was him, I would've quit a long time ago. Anyway, it was interesting just like you said."

That voice was familiar to him. It also described a very familiar situation.

The way east Asians count the seasons is slightly different from the west. In the west, 'autumn' apparently begins at the same time as the autumn equinox. However, the eastern countries consider it

as the 'middle' of autumn, meaning, the 'beginning' of autumn is half-way between the summer solstice and the autumn equinox. for more details. (the term in the story corresponds to the 135° solar term)

Traditional Korean housing. In this case, for people of high social status.

Chapter 397

-Everything can be forgiven as long as you aren't found out. No, there's no need for 'forgiveness'. They can't blame someone for something they don't know.

The moment Uljin heard those words, his stuffy feelings became refreshed in an instant. It would be fine as long as he was not caught. Conscience was something that was only active when a person was seen by another.

When he first did such a thing, it was just mischief. He gave lukewarm water to someone who asked him to bring cold water. He quickly apologized when the person that drank the water felt something was off. When he did, that person smiled back saying it was okay.

That gave a strange sense of pleasure. He had definitely done something wrong. Although it was something childish, he disguised his intentional actions as a mistake. Seeing that someone who was supposed to get angry smiled back at him instead, Uljin felt his tongue go dry. It was a strange sense of nervousness, and it was the feeling of satisfaction that stemmed from superiority.

-Don't do it to people who can cause damage to you. As for friends and family... well, that's up to you to decide. The main targets are those who can't fight back against you. There are people like them everywhere. Schools, libraries, streets, shops, parks. If you pay the slightest amount of attention, you'll find people who can't fight back against you.

Uljin found his targets according to those words. First, he excluded his friends and family. He had no leisure to be mischievous towards them. They were thankful people who he had to treat precious and look after.

After a bit of contemplation, he thought of a very good target. With these people, it was highly likely that he would never see them again, and they were always the weakest. These people could be seen whenever he heard someone scolding someone else.

Extras. He excluded staff members from his target since he would see them often in the future, but the background actors were people he would never see again after seeing them once, so they were suitable targets of his mischief.

Calling background actors to a completely random place saying that the leader told him to do it gave him a small amount of pleasure. When he apologized to the leader, who scolded those people, in their stead, the background actors would thank him even though he was the one that got them into trouble.

Looking at them, who could only thank him despite the fact that they knew who got them into trouble, made him want to burst out laughing. Why was it that he only found out about such a fun thing now?

However, that pleasure only lasted a brief moment. After some time, doing such mischiefs didn't make him enjoy it anymore. At first, when he gave that person lukewarm water, he felt like his heart was

thumping so hard despite the fact that he had barely done anything. He wanted to taste that thrill again. Uljin then decided to up the scale of his mischiefs.

He looked for people who looked downwards when being scolded by the leader. At that time, he found a suitable target. He stepped on that man's fingers, who played dead while the camera wasn't rolling. For a moment, he had the thought that things might go wrong and quickly took his foot away, but when he saw the man's awkward smile, his worries flew away.

He quickly approached him and asked if he was okay, and like always, the reply was that the man was okay. Uljin barely held himself back from laughing out loud before walking away. After that, he peeked at the man inside the alley. He looked to be in pain without any place to express it. He really looked pitiful and pathetic.

Such a man's dirty life and his own life were completely different. A person that looked like he had children couldn't say a word about his pain and had to sell a false smile to a person much younger than him.

Ah, what a happy life did he live compared to that man? Uljin felt thankful for his parents and his family. He also got some motivation to never let his life become like that. He reflected on his past self who didn't want to practice, and he could also whip himself to do better in the future.

He was able to thank every single thing around him just by trampling on someone who he didn't have any relationship with, for just a brief moment. Moreover, that someone was a person who could be found anywhere. What a cool thing was that?

The man that had his fingers stepped on was destined to be trampled upon by someone else somewhere else. If so, wasn't it better for that person to become his foothold instead?

Uljin hung up as he promised to meet the friend that allowed him to experience such things. He was just about to enter the bathroom with his phone in his hand, but he felt a presence inside.

No one heard him right? He was a little excited, so his voice was a little loud. Despite that, though, he could say that he was talking about a game if that person just listened to the conversation. It was also likely that the person inside was just a tourist, so he could just enter without being worried.

When he entered the bathroom, he saw a familiar person standing in front of the mirror. He was the beggar that he shot with today. This fellow was quite good at acting as well. It felt rather nice to meet him after thinking about the man who lived a worthless life. Yes, life was supposed to be worth living.

"The weather is hot, isn't it?"

The boy playing the 2nd beggar spoke to him. Although the two seemed to be similar in age, polite speech was the norm in the field. From how that boy could speak with polite speech without sounding awkward, he looked like someone with good senses. Uljin liked him more.

"Yes, it is. But where were you all this time? I couldn't see you."

"Oh, I was just playing a dead man for a while."

The tap opened and water started gushing out. Uljin looked at the stream of water that came out through the silver-colored pipe. Was this guy next to the man who got his hand stepped on? He was a little nervous, but he soon realized that there was no need to mind about that and spoke,

“I was there too. It must have been hard. I mean, the ground was uneven, wasn’t it?”

“But it was cool, so it wasn’t that bad.”

“That’s good.”

“You were good at acting from what I saw. Do you study at an academy?”

“Yes. I do most of my studying at an academy.”

“I also want to do well, but I really can’t do it.”

“No way, you were good though.”

“Me? It’s the first time I heard that. Haha.”

“Have more confidence in yourself. We’re just starting off, aren’t we? You can do it.”

“That’s not true. I’m just a minor actor. I’m ways off compared to you, Mr. Uljin. You’re incredible for playing a lead role at your age. You must have practiced a lot, right?”

“I did. There’s nothing that can be done without practice, though, is there?”

“There can be. There are geniuses. Aren’t you a genius who puts in effort as well?”

“Hahaha. That’s not true at all.”

Uljin smiled as he rubbed his nose. A genius who also puts in effort. Those were some nice words to hear.

“Uhm, how old are you?” The 2nd beggar asked.

Uljin replied that he was eighteen.

“So we’re the same age. I should also get some practice and try to escape my current status. I don’t know if it would work though.”

“It will. I also became successful despite not having much talent. You can do it as long as you put in the effort.”

The 2nd beggar seemed to be looking up to him. Uljin made the leisurely smile of the one walking ahead of one of his peers.

“But....”

The 2nd beggar looked in the mirror. He spoke after shaking the water off his hands and redoing his wig.

“That man back there.”

Uljin felt a prickle in his stomach, but he asked back without showing anything.

“Who do you mean?”

“The man who got his fingers stepped on.”

“Ah, right. I did make a bit of a mistake. I really feel sorry for him. Though, it didn’t look like he was hurt a lot.”

“I thought so as well, but he disappeared mid-way. From what I heard, he seemed to have gone home early.”

“...Go home early?”

“Yes.”

The 2nd beggar spoke as though it was nothing much. He wiped his mouth with his fingers and looked at Uljin.

“It’s a bit..., right?”

“Eh? Well, I don’t feel that good. I should go apologize to him.”

Was he being condemned? Uljin felt himself shrinking back. Did his mischief go too far after all? Should he have stopped? But at the same time, he felt a sense of resistance against this boy. Why was he saying such a thing? Was he telling him to apologize? To feel guilty?

At that moment, Uljin heard an air escaping sound. He wondered what it was. When he raised his head, he saw the 2nd beggar making a faint smile.

“Why apologize? He chose that life?”

“What?”

“Ah, did I go a little too far? Actually, I think that there are classes in life. Why should such a cool guy like you apologize to such a low-class person? Going home early just because his fingers were stepped on? That’s just not being a pro. Don’t you think?”

His thumping heart calmed down as though it never raced in the first place. He made a small sigh of relief, and at the same time, the feeling of pleasure dwelled in him. It felt as though he met an old friend at an unfamiliar place. The existence of a person who had the same mindset as him made Uljin excited.

However, he couldn’t just blatantly express that.

“But I am still in the wrong.”

“Wow, Mr. Uljin. You’re really kind. You’re a pro, and yet you’re so kind-hearted as well. Honestly, if it was me, I would have forgotten about it after apologizing on the spot. I mean, he went home just because he was stepped on? Tsk. You don’t need to be considerate of such people. Just look at the other actors. They stay at the shoot whether it’s raining or snowing. Are you going to take a break from shooting just because you sprained a few fingers?”

“No, I can’t do that.”

“Right? There are dozens, no, hundreds of people working for the drama at the shoot, yet he dares to cause trouble for their schedule? I can’t understand such a life. Well, it’s precisely because he’s such a person that he comes and does this job at his age, right?”

Uljin inwardly exclaimed. This boy’s words were without restraint, and his ideals were the same as him. His eyes were vivid and his face contained confidence. This boy, it was just like looking at that friend. Uljin barely held himself back from grinning and spoke.

“But that’s his way of living his life and...”

“You finally said something proper. You’re right. That pathetic life of his is just his way of life. Someone much younger than him, yes, I mean you, Mr. Uljin, is striving his best to become an actor, yet... nah, I don’t want to talk about it. Such a man isn’t worth talking about.”

The 2nd beggar washed his mouth as though he ate something bitter.

Uljin’s palms felt ticklish. He wanted to say it. He wanted to say that he thought the same. On top of that, he wanted to introduce that friend of his. Having a conversation between the three of them would be much more constructive than two.

“Don’t say too much. He must have his reasons,” he spoke as he barely held back from speaking otherwise.

When he did, the 2nd beggar covered his mouth and laughed.

“Mr. Uljin. You’re more naive than you look. You know, I honestly think that such people should become our footholds. Bluntly speaking, even if there’s a truckload of such people, would they match up to you? People have their classes as well, from A to F. If people like you are A-class, such a man is F-class. It’s just like his job. He’s an ‘extra’ in life. Well, I’m also F-class right now, but I’m different from that man. At least I’m not pathetic enough to leave just because my fingers got stepped on. Don’t you think so too?”

A wet tissue flew towards the trash can. Uljin spoke after seeing the trash fall into the trash can.

“...Well, he definitely is less-than-ordinary.”

“Right?”

“Yes. I mean, he just went home after being slightly injured. Does that even make any sense? He just doesn’t want to work. He just came hearing that the part time job is easy, and just went home after getting an excuse.”

Uljin snorted and spoke.

“Did you know? Even if he leaves in the middle of the shoot like that, he will still get his pay for the parts he worked on. That’s absurd, don’t you think? He probably left knowing full well. He’s probably resting inside the coach right now. Then, he’ll slowly crawl back out and join the shoot again, and get some more money while at it.”

“Really?” The 2nd beggar replied as he didn’t know.

Uljin started speaking in excitement.

"It's true. There's a reason such people don't have a decent workplace at his age. If it was me, I wouldn't do such a job because of embarrassment."

"Extras... it's an embarrassing job, isn't it?"

The 2nd beggar asked as he walked to one of the urinals. Uljin spoke boldly at his back.

"Of course. I don't even know what to say about him looking like that at his age. Oh, I'm not talking about you, by the way. We're still young. And you're good at acting too. You have the skill, unlike that man."

"Yeah, yeah. Sure. Not having any skill at his age. No wonder he's looked down upon."

"You're right. You should've seen his face when he just grinned, saying that he wasn't hurt. It was really pathetic."

"Really? Haha."

The 2nd beggar left the bathroom after saying that. Uljin quickly walked up to him and walked next to him. He found someone who he could talk to. He thought that he could become friends with him.

"Uhm, what's your name?"

"Me? Why do you want to know my name?"

"We're the same beggar family now, aren't we? We should get along."

"Ah, family? Haha, family, that's right. We're family."

The 2nd beggar turned his head.

"I'm Han Maru. But don't remember my name."

"Why? I think we can become friends."

"No way. How can a mere minor actor like me be friends with a lead actor? Just pretend like you know me when you come across me in the future."

"No, but still..."

"I'm going off first."

Han Maru waved his hand over his shoulders. Uljin looked at him with a rather dumbfounded expression. He thought that he could become friends with him since he could talk to that guy.

At that moment, Maru slightly turned around.

"Oh, right."

Putting on a smile, he continued,

“Actually, it really hurts when someone else steps on your fingers. I mean, it really hurts, to the point that you can’t speak. But it’s quite incredible that he can think about his children and smile instead, right? That’s right, I think it’s incredible. It’s an unspeakably amazing thing to do.”

Uljin stared at Maru as he thought about the incomprehensible words he just said.

Psh

Chapter 398

“Let’s eat dinner before we continue.”

Changsung said as he saw the sunset. The time on the set was managed by the skies. Even if a digital clock indicated that it was 8 p.m., it would still be ‘noon’ if the sun was still up. Although cutting-edge technology was being used on the set, time was still ruled by analog means.

“The start is good. There were no accidents, and we’ve shot all the day scenes that we planned,” Jinhyuk spoke as he raised the walkie-talkie volume. He told the staff members that were scattered throughout that it was dinner time.

“It might be just beginner’s luck, so don’t let your guard down. Oh, where’s the leader right now?”

“He’s over there. Should I call him?”

“No, I’ll go there.”

Changsung told Jinhyuk to eat first before walking to where the leader was. He could see the leader who was gathering the background actors.

“Thanks for your work.”

“Ah, yes.”

The leader smiled back at him.

“I think I’ll be fine with twenty people for the evening shoot. Let’s send off one of the coaches and shoot with just the rest.”

“What kind of people should I leave behind?”

“Five women in their forties to fifties, and the rest should be men of equal ratio across different ages.”

“Okay, I’ll do that.”

“Have you had dinner yet?”

“No, I’m about to though. How about you, producer?”

“I was about to eat as well.”

After telling him to have a nice meal, he then greeted the background actors.

Just as he yawned and was about to go to where the staff was eating, he saw Moonjoong passing by.

“Sir, are you going to have dinner?”

“No, I was going to do some greetings.”

“Do some greetings?”

“Don’t mind me and eat first.”

Moonjoong smiled and walked by. Changsung turned around and followed where Moonjoong was going with his eyes. Who was he going to greet? He became slightly curious and followed with a bit of distance between them. When Moonjoong stopped, he was standing in front of the background actors who were getting ready to go home.

“Have you had dinner?”

Hearing that, most of the background actors shook their heads. Food was only provided to those that had shoots in the evening, so most of those people would have to get on the coach without being able to eat.

“You should have dinner before you go. Uhm, leader. Can I take these people to that restaurant over there?”

“Ah, sure. Please do.”

The leader, who always had his eyes wide open and had meticulous control over people, smiled back at Moonjoong as he replied. Moonjoong thanked the leader.

“Thank you for all your work. You should eat your dinners over there.”

Moonjoong took the fifty-or-so background actors to the home-style food restaurant right in front of the tourist district.

Changsung took out his walkie-talkie as he saw the restaurant’s door close.

“Planning team.”

-Yes, please speak.

“The coach departs in 30 minutes.”

-Roger that.

Changsung smiled and put away his walkie-talkie. It had been almost 10 years since he started his job. He had come across numerous veteran actors. They were veterans of war who had survived this fiercely competitive entertainment industry. Most of them did not care about what was around them. They just came on time and left once their job was done without any flaws.

Among them, there were some that only looked after themselves, scolded the staff for not giving them high-class outfits, and even treated the staff like servants. However, most of the time, they explained in words what they needed and checked on the results themselves.

Such people had formed a nearly perfect action mechanism as an individual so they did not require nor want help from others. Even when an accident happened on the set, they would either solve it quickly or quickly step back. Watching them gave Changsung the feeling that they were like machines in a way.

When he was still a newbie producer, he always got angry when seeing leaders who treated background actors without any respect. The leaders did not speak with polite speech even to those older than them, pointed fingers, and raised their voices whenever they felt like it. He didn't say anything since his senior producer did not say a word about it, but inside, he was burning up with passion that he should right this wrong.

In one such moment, there was a veteran actor who watched the scene with him, and that actor called him to some place quiet to have a talk.

"If it's not related to you, don't mind it. This place is a complicated place."

Changsung became very angry when he heard those words. One of the leaders of the entertainment industry had said such a thing. He avoided those incidents with excuses, much less step up and prevent such matters.

The figure of that actor, as well as the mechanical image of veteran actors in Changsung's mind, overlapped and he started seeing all the veteran actors as hypocrites who acted like they didn't see anything when they saw injustice as long as they weren't involved.

He inwardly thought that that was why people said that the entertainment industry was corrupt, and thought about what he could do to fix it. Just then, he saw the leader in front of his eyes.

Changsung scolded the leader with his position as the producer and told him to respect the background actors and not shout at them. He expected the leader to make a sorry expression and apologize, but the leader just said okay before saying to him just this:

"The responsibility is on you then, okay?"

After that, break time was over and the shoot resumed. They had to put the background actors on wait and call for the lead actors, but he couldn't see the background actors that were supposed to be prepared. They were in a rush as well. The skies had turned dark, and there were signs of a coming rain so they had to be quick with the shoot.

Changsung quickly looked for the leader. That was because the leader was in charge of managing the personnel. When he asked the leader where the actors wearing the palace outfits were, the leader shrugged and said that he told them to wait in this place.

Back when the only form of communication was pagers, the props team had collected the pagers from the background actors, saying that it was a hindrance to the shoot. Having no choice, he and the leader ran around the area looking for people, and he was able to find people wearing palace outfits taking photos with other people.

Changsung was flabbergasted. He asked why they were here and not waiting. When he said that, one of the background actors smiled and replied to his question with another question: 'Isn't it fine even if we just go back now?'

Anger rushed up to his head when he heard such complacent words, but just then, it started raining. He could hear through the walkie-talkie that the shoot was over. Changsung shouted at the background actors on the spot - What are you doing? Why can't you do this properly? Are you here to play around?

After a round of commotion, the background actors just returned while saying that he was making it into a big deal. He had to watch in vain as they walked away. The leader then approached him and spoke in a small voice,

“That’s what you get for stepping into something you can’t even take responsibility for. You asked why I shout at them, right? That’s because they break their promises on a whim, run to somewhere else on another whim, and won’t listen to any word I say if I tell them in a nice way. To us, this is work, it’s our job. We’re people who would die if we can’t do the job. However, among those idiots, there are people who just come to get some pocket money for the day. I also want to be seen in a good light. But can I control them if I ask them nicely? Of course, there are nice people as well. There are many people who listen to every word I say even if I tell them nicely. But there are more people that don’t. This is a workplace, not a place to evaluate their personalities. You should put work first. Anyway, let’s just do our jobs in the future, okay? Don’t butt in.”

He was embarrassed. As a newbie producer, everything in the world seemed unjust, but the people living inside had their own order.

Just as he got an earful from his senior producer, a veteran actor quietly said a word to him.

“I still don’t understand how amazing I would have to be if I am to take care of others in this world where I have a hard time taking care of myself. That’s why I gave up after trying a few times. I get that you’re young and ambitious, but you should do it when you can. If you get yourself fired up for something you can’t even do, people around you will get tired, not you.”

In a world where stars rose and fell, those that witnessed the shine and disappearance of numerous stars had their own means of survival. They weren’t dismissive of the weak from the beginning. It was just that they put in their best efforts to survive.

It was precisely because the world was like this that Moonjoong was amazing. He greeted the staff of his own accord, and looked after the background actors. Many times, he sat with them and listened to their stories, so some of the staff that had never seen him before would sometimes be confused that he was just an elderly man who came to play a background role.

Moonjoong looked after others in unseen places just that much. On top of that, he did it at every single shoot.

It was a harsh world. Overnight shoots couldn’t be counted, and they had to wait indefinitely if the environment didn’t match what they needed. In such a place, looking after others when it was hard to look after oneself was incredibly difficult.

If asked whether he wanted to become a person like Moonjoong, Changsung would reply no. The little duckling that scolded the leader at that time was long gone. What remained was the sense of duty to create good works, as well as the small ambition of being successful.

Changsung took off. He had to finish his meal before it was too late. Just as he was walking on the streets of the Joseon era, he saw the minor actors for the beggars walking towards him from the other side.

“Have you had dinner?”

“Yes. We ate already.”

The one that replied was the 2nd beggar. His name was... yes, Han Maru. It seemed that he really became the leader of the group after spending their time together the whole day as the rest of the children seemed to be following him.

“Alright. See you later. You’ll get to go home after the evening scene, so do your best.”

“Okay.”

Changsung walked past him and walked along the fences of the hanok. Just then, he felt a presence behind him and turned around. There, he saw Maru.

“What is it? You have something to tell me?”

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Well, sure.”

“I’m asking this just in case, but are there instances where the actors for the roles are switched from the original decision?”

“Instances where actors change, huh.”

Changsung crossed his arms. Although Maru had a calm expression on his face, perhaps due to the shade over his face, he gave off a sharp impression. He also seemed a little angry.

Actor change. Changsung made a faint smile. There were a few instances where minor actors asked him this question. He couldn’t say for sure that he knew what they were thinking, but they should all be thinking similar things. They probably came across a lead actor or a supporting actor that seemed inferior to them and were asking if they could replace that actor.

Do your best, if you put in the effort, it’s possible, win against them with your skill. Many words flashed by in his mind, and Changsung finally spoke,

“Absolutely not. Dramas are a meticulously-planned market.”

“Okay then.”

He didn’t even look disappointed. He just took a bow as though he asked that question to get confirmation and turned around.

“But why do you ask?” Changsung asked this time.

Maru turned around again and spoke,

“I don’t have a specific reason. I was just curious.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I guess that doesn’t matter then.”

Maru turned around once again.

After watching him for a while, Changsung said one more thing.

“The roles can’t change, but their importance might.”

As soon as he finished his words, Maru replied.

“I thought so as well.”

There was a nonchalant smile on his face.

Chapter 399

Maru entered the home-style food restaurant. He could hear the elder’s voice among the noisy conversations. When he went deeper inside, he found Moonjoong talking with the background actors.

“Please continue eating.”

Moonjoong stood up and went outside. Maru followed him out.

“Now I get some air to breathe.”

“It was very hot during the day. But I thought you were eating?”

“I finished and was talking about worldly matters with the others. So, have you eaten?”

“Yes, I have.”

Moonjoong walked to the vending machine in front of the store. He asked as he inserted some coins he got from his pocket.

“Coffee? Or tea?”

“I’ll take coffee, please.”

The vending machine made some machine noises before making a coffee. Maru received the paper cup that Moonjoong gave him. As the sun had set, it felt rather good to have some warmth in his hands.

He followed Moonjoong to a tree standing next to the restaurant. They sat down on an old wooden bench and started drinking. There were a lot of people at the entrance of the tourist area. It seemed that it was open late into the night. Colorful lights brightened the dull gates and soldiers wearing military uniforms showed a brief performance in front of it.

“How was the shoot?”

“I think I did enough to the point that I won’t have any regrets. Have you done your shoot yet, elder?”

“Just a short one. And I’ll also have another one in a moment. I think you’re in the shoot with me.”

“Yes. You’re probably right about that.”

“Please take care of me then. These days, I’m lacking energy and I find much comfort in just going along with other people.”

“Do I even have the ability to?”

“What are you saying? You can do it.”

Moonjoong laughed heartily. Maru took the empty paper cup from Moonjoong’s hands and threw them away into the trash. Just then, the restaurant opened and the background actors came out. After looking around, they found Moonjoong and headed for the bench.

“Thank you. All of us had a good meal.”

“No need to thank me. We’re all doing this to make a living so it’s bad to starve. Thanks for your work today, and those of you going home, please be safe, and as for the ones that will remain, please take care of me until the end.”

The background actors took photos with Moonjoong before walking away.

“When I was still in my prime, there were a lot of people I called brothers, but now that I came back from a long break, I don’t know anyone here. It looks like all of them quit.”

“It is a hard job after all.”

The job required people to stand under the scorching sun and wait, or perhaps wait in the freezing cold. Although some of the better environments were cool in summer and warm in winter, just waiting for hours without doing anything was hard in itself.

A man who claimed that he had ten years of acting as a background actor once told Maru to not continue this job for long. Apparently, he had served his youth into this job since it allowed him to continue working whenever he wanted without much skill, but he found out that it wasn’t a good choice at all.

The time of his youth that he spent waiting could not be returned, and he lamented that he could only continue this job because that was the only thing he could do.

There were sometimes opportunities for background actors as well. Doing it for a long time, one would come across a role with lines, and they might be able to get a better role in the future if they catch a producer’s eye or something. However, these kinds of opportunities only shine when someone who came across it was prepared. To people that only considered it as labor, the opportunity would just pass by.

There were many people that worked as background actors with the dream of becoming an actor one day, but most of the time, background actors were here to watch other actors working, or to get a fresh experience. Opportunity had no eyes. It came across people purely due to coincidence and did not care whether the person was desperate or not. What would be a golden opportunity for someone disappeared like that, and the people that came here as background actors also left the stage like that as well.

That was why it was not easy to run into people who kept doing this job for long.

“If you have the leisure to treat those people to a meal, I hope you don’t ignore them and treat them kindly.”

"I shall."

After smiling in satisfaction, Moonjoong looked at Maru before asking.

"But did something happen?"

"There wasn't anything much."

"In my eyes, you seem a little upset. I'm glad if you say it's nothing much. If you have anything to say though, you should say it."

"Was my expression that bad?"

"Your expression is the same as always, and your actions are as polite as always too. But your voice is different from normal. It has an edge to it."

"I can't even lie in front of you, elder."

"Brat, you were trying to lie to me?"

"Of course not. I don't dare."

After thinking about it for a while, Maru spoke,

"I came across someone I don't like."

"Did that person bully you?"

"No, it's not like that."

"Well, I guess you aren't someone that would stand being bullied."

"I'm not that aggressive."

"Scammers don't introduce themselves as scammers either."

"Have I done you wrong, elder? You are very spicy today."

"There was a young man who said he'd drink with me before, but that man didn't show up at all. Boy is he mean. I wonder why I bought some pork belly and put it in my fridge. I really regret it."

Moonjoong narrowed his eyes. Maru smiled awkwardly. He definitely made such an appointment with Moonjoong before. It wasn't that he forgot, but as he kept getting more events and practices in his schedule, he didn't have any time and ended up delaying that promise to a much later date. He thought that it would be fine to visit him after all these events since it wasn't like they had set on a date, but it seemed that the elder was looking forward to his visit.

"Elder. I'm in the wrong. I'm sorry."

"You did nothing wrong. It's just this old man who misunderstood everything."

"How about this weekend? I'll come over and cook for you."

"This weekend, huh. It might do, it might not."

“Then I’ll visit you then.”

Moonjoong laughed in a low voice before tapping on Maru’s knees. Maru also smiled as he was influenced by the elder’s relaxing hands.

“Yes, that’s the smile. Retract the blade from your words. It’s very dangerous to harbor a knife in your throat when you’re young. It’s more likely that you’ll end up injuring yourself before harming others. Of course, I think you’ll be fine since you’re a tough one, but affection is still better than a blade, don’t you think?”

Maru nodded as he looked at Moonjoong’s calm eyes. He felt that the rage that burned silently in a corner of his heart was subsiding a little. He came here upon Moonjoong’s text message thinking that he wanted a conversation partner, but he was consoled instead.

“May I ask you an obvious question?”

“Sure.”

“What do you do when you come across someone you don’t like?”

“What do you do normally?”

“If that person harms me, I act immediately. It’s the same when that person tries to harm those around me. Other than that, I honestly just look away if nothing bad happens even if I ignore them.”

“I can’t say that you’re in the right, but it definitely is a wise way of dealing with it. So the reason you’re angry is because someone near you was harmed, right? Since you said you were fine.”

“No, that’s not it either. Normally, I would do nothing and just walk by, but for some reason, I got emotional. While I think that it’s a waste of effort, I also want to up one on him. I know, it’s childish. What do you do at a time like this, elder? I know that it’s likely that he will one day embarrass himself precisely because of his actions, but I also think that he might get lucky and become successful.”

The words that pushed someone else onto the edge of a cliff were not direct words, but sweet words. The reason that Maru did not scold Uljin and went along with his words was because he found preaching to him to be a waste. If Uljin did that because he was immature and didn’t know how scary the world was, he might have said a word or two to him, but from the way he excitedly talked about himself, he seemed to be well aware of what he was doing. His eyes were colored in bliss when he admitted that he stepped on the man’s fingers of his own will.

“There’s a Chinese proverb that says: If someone tries to harm you, do not try to get revenge and just wait by the river. Not long later, you will see his corpse float by,” Moonjoong said those words as he looked at Maru.

So did he mean that it was better to just keep watching? Just as Maru was about to nod, though,

“However, it doesn’t really fit the current times. In this era, the ones that secretly do evil deeds are more well-off. That’s why I want to tell you this. If the corpse does not float by even after you wait long enough, it might be a good idea to give him a little push on the back.”

Seeing Moonjoong’s mischievous expression, Maru couldn’t help but laugh.

“Then what if he actually falls in the river? I don’t want to be a murderer.”

“Well, that’s his fate then.”

“You’re too scary, elder.”

“Now you found out?”

Maru rubbed his smile off and stood up. It was about time.

“Then I’ll take my leave first. My dinner time is over.”

“Okay then. I hope you do well.”

“Yes. Then I’ll get myself prepared to push his back just a little.”

“Boy.”

“Yes?”

“You must find a suitable time to do it, okay?”

“Haha. Okay.”

“Also, I will pretend not to know you as much as possible during the shoot. No, well, I guess I can do it if you want me to.”

“I don’t want to receive so much attention. I’ll call out to you first when I am able to stand alongside you, elder.”

“I thought you’d say that so I didn’t tell the producer about it.”

“...I think it’s okay to leak the secret out just a little.”

“What do you want me to do?”

Moonjoong quickly waved him to go. Maru bowed before turning around. If just watching the guy didn’t satisfy him, he had no choice but to give him that final push. Uljin was a lead actor-level child actor. There was no way he could steal that role from him. However, as the producer said, it was possible to shift the importance of the characters. After all, dramas weren’t created with a finished script.

“Hyung, where were you?”

“I just went to get some fresh air.”

As soon as he got back to the other minor actors, the staff told them to get ready. It seemed that one scene just finished. He followed the staff while wearing beggar attire.

They went back to the opening in which they shot during the day. The equipment had already been set up. It was ready to shoot once the actors were here.

“What the, we aren’t starting immediately?”

One of the minor actors younger than Maru grumbled. The staff, who acted like they would begin as soon as they were ready, received a transmission on a walkie-talkie before sitting down on the spot. Like

that they had to wait 20 minutes until Park Moosung, the actor they saw during the day, appeared wearing a black gat. Next to him were the two child actors, Giwoo, Uljin, as well as the two producers.

“Get ready.”

The lights installed around the area started emitting light. Moosung stroked his beard before standing in front of the camera. He spoke as he looked a little far away.

“My friend, I welcome you.”

Moonjoong walked to him wearing a white dopye from where Moosung was looking. Maru greeted him with his eyes. Moonjoong smiled and walked in front of Moosung.

“Did you wait long?”

“I did. I told you we should eat together.”

“You know my habits and you still say such words?”

“I do know. How dare I not know the great elder Yoon Moonjoong who has a righteous character?”

“Haha, this fella.”

The two adults joked around in historical speech and the atmosphere soon became soft. Even the staff members that were annoyed by mosquitoes smiled pleasantly.

“Producer. We might as well proceed with the shoot. This many people are staring at your mouth.”

When Moonjoong said that, producer Changsung walked forward.

“Well then, let’s finish things off before the seniors run out of stamina. We’re starting the rehearsal,” producer Changsung spoke as he gestured at the minor actors.

Chapter 400

Right vs Good. If asked to choose one, Maru would choose good without the slightest hesitation. What seemed ‘right’ seemed ‘good’, but the moment someone entered that, they would be thrown into a world of segregation that was different from others.

What was ‘right’, usually went against real life order. To the people that were used to order, ‘right’ only looked like self-satisfaction. Are you the only one that’s righteous? - those words would be the first words that would be heard when someone chose right instead of good.

Even if something wasn’t right, if it was deemed good, the members of a community would disguise it as right and justify it.

‘Right’ called for dispute, while ‘good’ called for harmony.

Maru knew the scariness of ‘right’. The moment one stood on the side of the ‘right’, they could become a historical figure, that is, someone sacrificed for everyone to see. It was always lonely when doing something right. It was a boring and lonely battle. The Mr. Lees and Mr. Parks he was close to would no longer talk to him, while the Mr. Kims and Mr. Chois who usually never talked to him would approach him and ask him to reconsider.

What he learned as he dug into the corruption of the president's son that entered the company through the back door was that the right thing must never be done.

However, Maru was also aware that he was the type of person who had to carry something out to the end once he started it. He was definitely not an advocate of righteousness, he didn't even want to be one. In fact, his dream was to get by while following the 'good' 'evil', but he always foolishly hesitated in front of that path and went back to where he came from.

Maru smiled as he saw Uljin standing in front of him. Uljin hesitated for a while before making an awkward smile. If he was to choose the good and comfortable path, he should talk about what they talked about in the bathroom and become close to him. TV media was also created by people. He might be able to get Uljin to help him if he got close to him.

A background actor retired early because of a finger injury. It was a painful matter, but strictly speaking, it wasn't relevant to him at all. A nameless background actor he probably would never meet again versus Uljin, who was highly likely to become a popular actor. It was obvious which side to stand on.

In front of such an obvious path, he decided to walk in the opposite direction.

He saw his father's figure from that man when he clutched his fingers in pain. This could also be considered very trivial.

How was he supposed to endure social life if he was concerned about every little thing like that? Objectively speaking, it wasn't his father that was injured, but the voices of Mr. Lees and Mr. Parks filled his mind. It was a battle no one would credit him for, and nor was it a necessary battle. As he aspired to become one of the so-called kkondae, he should just make a smile and forget about it, but it seemed that it was hard to make that single smile.

He smelled some pain-relief medicine. It was from his memory. It was from the man with the sprained fingers, as well as from his father's room when he took a break from factory work.

Maru curved his lips upwards.

Of course, he wasn't planning on a big revenge. He didn't have a reason to do so either.

Just that, he was going to do his best; his best to distract a certain someone.

"I took you in as you were drying out to death, and you hang around with beggars? Hur hur, I wonder how such a rude child was born in the family."

The scene where Moosung clicked his tongue when he saw Giwoo hang around some beggars was over. Giwoo, who watched as Moosung got back in the palanquin with his fists clenched, turned around. The producer captured the two people as they distanced apart and shouted cut.

"Senior, thank you for your work."

"Then I'll take my leave first. Keep up the good work. Moonjoong, you should answer my calls. Let's drink once the shoot is done."

"Say that after you actually call me."

Moosung left the set. It seemed that his scenes were done for today.

“Let’s continue immediately.”

Giwoo’s monologue started with the dark streets as the background. The lights that were installed on both sides of the camera separated Giwoo from the dark streets.

“I will also become successful one day. I will one day also gain fame and prestige and stand proud in front of grandfather. Rude? Just you wait. I will pass the national exams and enter the ranks of officials. As you say, grandfather, this little one is far from being virtuous. However, it’s not like becoming successful requires virtue.”

Giwoo said those words in a low voice as he stared at the camera. When he heard the cut sound, he sighed out and loosened his body. Producer Changsung said that it was good, but also said that they should get another cut. It seemed that he was putting a lot of effort into this scene because this was the scene that showed the young Han Myung-hoe’s resolve.

Maru took out his phone to check the time. It was 9 p.m. It had been two hours since the shoot resumed after dinner. The younger members sitting next to him all yawned. They all smiled when he patted them on the shoulders, saying that they should endure just a little more.

“Okay!”

Finally, an energetic voice sounded out. After saying the same lines over and over again, Giwoo took a bow. It seemed that he felt sorry for taking so much time by himself.

“Well then, let’s continue right away.”

Producer Changsung quickly proceeded to the next step and waved at Giwoo. Maru watched the two from afar. Although he couldn’t hear their voices, he could tell that producer Changsung was trying to encourage Giwoo. Although the emotional control was the actor’s job, perhaps the producer’s job was to control the actors themselves.

After a short break, the equipment was set up again. The next shooting location was outside a tavern where there were four flat platforms. A woman who dressed up like a tavern lady received coaching on one side while travelling merchants with large baggage were placed throughout the scene.

Following that, Moonjoong appeared at the tavern. He was with a warrior with a sword, and he checked the movement lines with the producer. This scene was where he walked past the tavern and spotted Giwoo who was with Uljin.

Maru and the minor actors were also called to wait behind Uljin. The scene started with Giwoo buying some food from the tavern.

This was the scene where Giwoo left the tavern with a bag full of rice balls, and his steps were quite stiff, perhaps thanks to making a few mistakes in the scene before. Only after producer Changsung instructed him to walk normally did they finish off the scene without causing an NG.

“You have to peek over the fence to see whether Myung-hoe is coming or not. I think you two should do the job.”

Maru, who was appointed, sat right against the fence. Another member sat next to him. When they heard the cue sound, they peeked over the fence. On the other side, Giwoo walked towards them. When he became sufficiently close, Maru made an expression that made him look filled with expectation before tapping on the back of the little brother next to him and pulling out from the alley.

“Cut! That was good.”

They got an okay sign from the producer.

“Thanks, hyung. I didn’t know the right time to pull out.”

“Next time I’ll give you the signal before I retract.”

“Okay, thanks.”

After finishing that cut, the next scene was where the beggars ate the rice balls that Giwoo brought. Along with the producer’s cue sign, Giwoo took out rice balls from the bag and gave one to each person.

“Eat it.”

This was the scene where Uljin slapped Maru’s hand, telling him to not eat it just as he was about to eat. As agreed upon, Uljin slapped Maru’s hand the moment Maru took a bite out of the rice ball.

Maru looked at the rice ball on the floor with pity before turning around and grabbing Uljin’s collars.

Originally, he was going to do things moderately at this part. It wasn’t a scene that the viewers would pay attention to, and it wasn’t one that the director would put a lot of effort into either. As the minor actor’s role was to make the lead actors shine, Maru always kept pace with the other party and controlled his emotions accordingly when he did his shoots. During the day, he did exactly that when he acted with Uljin and Giwoo. If nothing happened, he was going to get angry at Uljin with just his superficial emotions, but he had no intentions of doing that right now.

Maru dug into his memories as he looked at Uljin’s face. He brought out the faces of those that enraged him among his current and ‘past’ memories. If he could dig into the character he was acting, he would be able to produce emotions from the perspective of that character, but he didn’t do any research into this ‘2nd beggar’ he was acting right now. It was hard to pull out emotions from the character itself. That was why he decided to bring out Han Maru’s emotions. The petty people that disappointed him endlessly, as well as the hateful people that threatened him with his livelihood, came to his mind.

When the disgusting faces were drawn in front of his eyes, he felt his lips trembling.

This scene did not require this much emotion. In the drama, Gaeguk, albeit being young, was the big brother to all the beggars around. There was no reason to get so angry over a mere rice ball towards Gaeguk, but Maru unleashed all forms of rage he could express.

It was hard for Maru to imagine what kind of expression he was making right now. However, he could at least tell that his face looked vicious when he saw Uljin’s expression.

“Cut! Hey, Uljin. It’s your line next. Did you forget?”

Producer Changsung cut the shoot and spoke.

Maru let go of Uljin's collars. The camera did not shoot his expression. It only captured Uljin's face.

When he let go, Uljin started taking steps backwards. He gulped once before covering up his mouth with his hands and starting to breathe heavily. Maru smiled before turning around.

"Uljin. Why are you suddenly so nervous? Your expression is horrible. Didn't I tell you throughout the morning that Gaeguk is a smart and proud guy? That he's someone who can smile with a knife against his neck? You can't make a face like that."

"Ah, yes. I'm sorry."

"Get yourself together and let's do that again."

Maru dusted his clothes before standing in front of Uljin again. The minor actors and Giwoo were just watching them while leaning against the wall, yawning. The reflectors were adjusted before the microphone was placed above their heads. The shoot became quiet once again, and the producer's cue sound spread across.

He had already called out the emotion once. It was easy to replicate it. Once again, he grabbed Uljin's collars and glared at him. He felt as though he could smash Uljin's head right now. He directed all of his wrath towards Uljin in front of him.

"Uh..."

Uljin missed a beat and stuttered.

Emotions were curious things. Even while being aware that it was an act, the body enters a state of extreme tension when receiving violent emotions. The brain would keep shouting that the situation is all a pretense, but the body reacted differently.

The producer's cut sound sharply hit his ears. Maru calmed his breathing and let go before smiling. Uljin looked at Maru with an expression of not being able to understand before being called by Changsung.

"What is going on? Why is he suddenly acting like that?"

"Hyung, what's happening? Why is he so spaced out when he did so good before?"

Maru just shrugged his shoulders when they asked.

"Maybe he's tired."

"Is that right?"

Veteran actors used the emotions of opposing actors as motivation to materialize and accentuate their own before returning it back to them. This was why actors that were in sync were scary. They could continue their emotional acts like a raging train. They fueled each other until they reached their limits.

However, this ideal situation was only possible when the two actors were similar in skill. If one side could not process the emotions given off by the other, it would be impossible to continue acting.

In such a scenario, the actor that could not process the other's emotions had one of two choices: Either ask the other to tone down their emotion, or just ignore the other's emotion entirely and do their own acting.

The problem occurred when that actor did not even realize that the other party was expressing too much emotion. Maru saw Uljin who's head was down as he stood in front of the producer. That guy didn't even seem to know what he was up against. He was probably dazed because he was confused by the situation.

"Don't get nervous. You did well during the day, didn't you?"

Producer Changsung's words were still kind, but Maru could notice a hint of annoyance in his words. Uljin's face stiffened as well. Maru waited for the cue sign in front of them.

"Let's do this properly this time, okay?"

"Huh? Uh, yeah..."

Maru patted Uljin on the shoulders to encourage him. Yes, do your best. Do your best to try to solve it. Only that will make matters much worse.

After the cue sign, Maru repeated the same action as before. He gave Uljin a deathly glare, and Uljin barely spoke a line, and there was no way the producer would be satisfied with that.

"Haa."

A deep sigh could be heard. Changsung shouted cut and said that they should take a break. It had been less than ten minutes since the last break ended.

An outdated person who thinks he/she is always right and the younger generation are always wrong, and will try to preach.