

You never walk alone

Leisure room – Day time :

“I believe this belongs to you” Liliana shared “I’ve been holding on to it for the longest time, I was beginning to worry I may never get to give it back to you”.

Namjoon received the package and opened it: two objects were placed inside. The first object was a wooden box that contained the six mementos “I don’t think I can accept this from you. You received these items as a token of appreciation from your old roommates; I can’t claim their gratitude instead, it’s not right”.

“It will be once you claim the second object back” she encouraged him.

Upon unwrapping the second object, Namjoon stood frozen to the spot. He thought his old days were already behind him, but his wife made sure that he’d never forget his true identity. The coat between his hands had his name imprinted on the chest pocket “Dr. Kim N.”.

As she lovingly gazed at him, Liliana took the cloth from his hands and dressed him. Unsure if he was still worthy of the name, he held her hands and stopped her from buttoning the lab coat “I don’t know if I can do this, I have already failed once. I failed them, I failed you, I failed myself”.

Planting a soft kiss on his hand relaxed him just enough for her to continue dressing him up “If it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t have been able to save half of them. The tokens they delivered out of gratitude have always been yours. I may have helped them move on, but you did the biggest part of the job. These boys are not sick, they are lost. A failure is only a step backwards that helps you jump better forward. This is your unfinished business; don’t let it overpower you again”.

He watched his wife in admiration. He remembered how her words always got to him no matter how inflexible or conflicted he felt. He was barely back on his feet and he wasn’t expecting to go back to practicing anytime soon, but he knew the ultimate rule: the more you delay it, the sooner it’ll overwhelm you.

“Fine” Namjoon conceded “How are we going to do this?”

“First things first” she held on to his lab coat. She tiptoed to meet his length and placed a slow peck on his chin. Her cute attempt drew a smile on his face as he tilted his head down to get closer to her. He put both of his hands on her waist and pulled her towards him, and rested his forehead against hers. Smoothly, he sucked on her lower lip a couple of times before engaging in a luscious kiss.

After the kiss broke, Liliana was levitated. She missed her husband so much that their intimate moment felt like the first time. Trying to catch her breath, she poked him teasingly “This was supposed to be my token of appreciation, but I ended up being the one rewarded instead”.

“You can always show me your gratitude later” he playfully insinuated.

“Save your energy for later, then” she gently slapped his butt “Ready for the final transition?”

Ward W – Day time :

The final stop of the asylum is the most prestigious one, so-to-speak. The warriors’ ward, as its current residents named it, was occupied by patients who were during an observational period and expected to be discharged.

The six candidates gathered around for what was called “a special farewell”. For the past few months, all they did was act freely and focus on their passions, while awaiting the final verdict.

“I wonder what all of this is about” Jin broke the awkward silence.

“I thought we were done with all of these speeches” Yoongi nagged.

“I actually miss the party vibes, it always brightened the mood” Hoseok confessed.

The conversation ended once a silhouette in a lab coat entered the room, leaving the door open while analyzing each patient with a yearning heart.

“Lucy? Lucy’s finally here!” Taehyung exclaimed.

“Where is RM? Is he okay?” Jimin inquired.

“Did you escape? Why are you dressed like the staff?” Jungkook wondered.

While happy to see her old roommates again, Liliana felt burdened for having to break the news to the boys. She tried to get her act together and choose her words wisely in order not to create any more puzzlement than there already was.

“Hello, boys. My name is Liliana Evans” she announced to the dumbfounded audience “I’m a consulting psychologist at the institute. I specialize in cognitive and behavioral therapy and I have been observing you for the longest time”.

“L-Lucy? L-Liliana?” Taehyung couldn’t hide his confusion.

“I called it” Yoongi smirked, unaffected by the sudden news.

“I know this may come out as a shock to you all but I just need you to be patient with me” she assured them.

“We are patient” Jin responded “We’ve been patients for the longest time”.

“You have been part of an experimental project that we named “Project H”, it’s a self-assessment therapy that we simply took the initiative of monitoring” she explained “We wanted you to help yourselves on your own rather than depend on an outer authority, because everything is based on one’s will. If there is none that comes from within, there is nothing we can do to make you feel better”.

“H as in Hoax?” Yoongi snickered.

“H as in Hope” Hoseok intervened.

“H as in Healing” she corrected the duo “I know that it’s hard to take all of this in at once, but I would like to inform you that your parents have signed a consent on your behalf and we needed the project to remain incognito for it to work. Had you known, the treatment may not have worked the way it did now. I would love to tell you all about it but I’m only the co-founder of the project, thus, I’ll be leaving you with the doctor in charge to explain the whole process”.

In that moment, a second person entered the room. Many jaws dropped as the patients recognized their fellow member “Hello, my name is Dr. Kim and I’m your supervising doctor”.

“I think I need my pills back” Jimin urged.

“This is cooler than my Lalaland” Taehyung commented.

“To be honest, I don’t know what to say or do to make you feel better about all of this, so I will consider this session as my own transition to the ward and do it the old fashioned way” Namjoon grabbed a note from his chest pocket and unfolded it to read.

Hello, my name is Namjoon and I have been suffering a burnout. However, today I stand here before you with a promise to help cure my illness and free myself in the process.

I'm a psychiatrist. I've been in this field for 15 years now, and I never thought for a second that one day, I will end up in my patients' shoes. Project H was inspired by my very first case and that defied every theory, practice, and experiment I've ever witnessed throughout my studies.

With the help of Dr. Evans, we co-created this project and based it on the steps I carried out while handling the initial case. Unfortunately, the cases we were receiving did not respond to the primary tests, so the experiment remained inactive, until you were admitted to our institute.

Although most of you came in an agitated state, you surprisingly performed well on the trial, so we managed to create a leisure room that specifically answered to your needs, and we were able to start our experiment.

The first year was stable and the feedback was astonishing. Unfortunately during the second year, some of you started rebelling against the system, which made the results inconsistent and it was impossible to put you in a specific category. During that time, I also happened to have personal problems which affected my work. Seeing a project that was on paper for the longest time and only saw the light three years ago perish in front of our eyes, in front of my eyes, started affecting my health. Stress turned to anxiety, anxiety built up in the form of anger, and anger cost me everything that was dear to my heart.

What I want you to know is that, you're not just a project; you are the pillars of something great. You are beyond the mental scene. Your cases can change the world. You're six individuals that were brought together because of different pains but you served the same purpose: healing. Not being able to live up to my word and help you go back to the outside world broke me inside. I was responsible for you, I am responsible for you, but I lost control.

I tried to overcome it, but I failed miserably.

The time I spent here amongst you made me realize that we are the only people responsible for what we feel and fear. I hereby vow to not defy my illness, but rather accept it and slowly build myself around it: better, stronger, healthier until I bid it farewell.

I promise to be on my best behavior. Thank you for your constant love and support.

Usually, the room used to be full of cheers and applause once the farewell speech came to an end, but this time everything was different. While patients often received the cheering from the staff, now the doctor was the one expecting a word from the patients.

“So, let me get this straight” Jin initiated “You’re both doctors. You went mad and joined the project yourself, she was going mad trying to save you, and we were madmen on hold. Did I get it right?”

“Am I too hype right now ? Is this a new world?” Taehyung projected.

“B-But ... he was sedated most of the time” Jimin mentioned.

“And I thought I was the troubled one” Hoseok intervened.

Jungkook intervened “I believe none of us is well placed to speak ill of him, especially in his presence”.

“Well” Jin joked “Is it really ill to speak of the ill?”

“I see that you haven’t lost your lively spirit during my absence” Namjoon chuckled “We were going to let you know eventually. We just didn’t think that we’ll be taking part in the project ourselves before doing so”.

Yoongi ventured with an Agusted response “I told you before, you stick in the game too long, you might eventually lose it”.

Liliana was quick to say a word “You have been his patients for the longest time here. He has looked over you in every possible way, he listened to you and understood you, but he lost himself mid-way. Not being able to fully cure you wrecked him, it wrecked us. Therefore, this will count as a preliminary session where we will assess Dr. Kim’s abilities to interact with you as a whole, and we will analyze his coping system for the time being. We hope for your cooperation”.

“Wait a minute” Hoseok gasped “Doctor X, is that you?”

“Yes, for the most part” Namjoon replied.

Liliana followed up “While Dr. Kim was the original doctor behind the mirror glass, his absence caused a disturbance in the follow-up of your profiling, so I eventually had to step in and fill in for him”.

“Again, I called it! I knew you were too mental to be one of us” Yoongi declared.

“But ... “ Jungkook wondered “You WERE one of us, you had your own issues like the rest of us, you even had a passion that fit our circle ... Was it all a lie?”

Liliana smiled at the young boy “Not quite. My journal was in fact an assessment notebook, my job is my passion and writing down every bit of information helped me both cure you and save my husband in the process”.

“All of this talk is making me confused and hungry” Jin complained “Mostly hungry”.

Namjoon stepped in “Either way, the main reason you improved throughout the years was thanks to the incognito assessments. You can take all the medication in the world and hear all the pep talk your ears can bear, but if you don’t choose to feel better you never will”.

“But the medication actually worked, at least for me” Taehyung speculated.

“Did it though ?” Liliana pulled a bottle of pills from her lab pocket and swallowed a bunch.

“If you’re trying to drive us crazy again, it’s working” Jimin stated in frustration “Because I don’t think you can take that amount of pills at once. It’s dangerous and irresponsible”.

“You actually can, if you choose to” Namjoon pulled a bigger stash of pills from his pocket “Placebo effect, anyone ?”

Eyes around the room got wider by the minute. Some of them even started doubting this assessment session was doing any good to either of the two parties.

Namjoon intervened once more “Through this self-help experiment, your families wanted to protect you from the usual psychiatric procedures, so medication was off the table; but we still gave you placebo pills to keep the act up. From what I see, although I ended up paying for it with my own sanity, if I managed to help you, then it was all worth it. I want to thank you for saving me from myself; if I haven’t broken, I wouldn’t have known what I had and what I almost lost. If I hadn’t been in your shoes, I wouldn’t have known what the program was actually capable of. I owe you both my life and wife”.

Amazed by his little speech, Liliana concluded the session “This meeting was mainly held to give your doctor a closure with his resident monster. Thank you for helping me get my husband back. We will start the ward’s specific procedures very soon and we will work on getting you back to your loved ones. When that happens, we wish you the best of both worlds and we hope to never see you again”.

The corridors – Night time :

After one last routine check via the monitors, the couple headed towards the exit.

“Well, this has been a hectic couple of years. Don’t you agree, love?” Lilitiana spoke.

Namjoon nodded “What do you suggest we do about it?”

She winked at him “I don’t know about you, but I’m dying to get out of this lab coat”.

“I heard Ward R is officially evacuated. Care to examine the place together?” he suggested.

“Only if the experience is set to drive me out of my mind” she teased.

“Careful, the staff might hear us and it could cost us our credibility” Namjoon joked.

“Lead the way doctor” Lilitiana requested “Perhaps, the resident monster can pay us a visit tonight?”

“You’re a torrid one, Lucy” he picked her up and wrapped her legs around his pelvis.

Rejoiced, she softly whispered in his ear “It’s been a long year, RM”.