

FRIDAY NIGHT, AT SOME NOT-SO-POPULAR BAR...





THAT'S IT, GUYS! THIS IS
ROCK'N'ROLL!



FORGET IT,
MAN.

Don't
pay
attention!
It's free

NONE OF THE FOUR PEOPLE WHO WERE CRAZY ENOUGH TO SHOW UP TONIGHT GIVE A SHIT ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

RESTROOMS




FINE, MAN, WE HAD A BAD NIGHT.
SO WHAT? EVERY LEGENDARY BAND
HAS PLAYED TO HALF A DOZEN PEOPLE
WHEN THEY WERE STARTING OUT!





WE'RE NOT STARTING OUT, NICK. WE'RE ALREADY IN MID-TWENTIES, AND THIS BAND IS FIVE YEARS OLD. WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE. NOT AFTER YOU DECIDED THAT WE WERE GOING TO STOP PLAYING COVERS TO PLAY ONLY YOUR SONGS. GUESS WHAT? YOUR SONGS SUCK! NOBODY WANTS TO HEAR THIS CRAP. I'M OUT OF THIS FUCKING BAND!

GO TO HELL THEN! YOU'LL FUCKING REGRET THIS! WE CAN EASILY FIND A NEW BASS PLAYER, RIGHT, SAM?



ACTUALLY, I'M LEAVING THE BAND
TOO, NICK. DON'T GET ME WRONG.
I DON'T EVEN THINK YOUR SONGS
ARE THAT BAD... THE THING IS...
I GOT BILLS TO PAY. I CAN'T
KEEP PLAYING TO EMPTY BARS.
SORRY, MAN!

A man with short, light-colored hair, a goatee, and dark sunglasses is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a dark leather jacket over a dark t-shirt. He has a determined or slightly angry expression on his face. The background is a brick wall with several framed pictures hanging on it. The lighting is dramatic, with strong blue and purple hues. A speech bubble is positioned to the right of his head, containing text.

YOU TWO ARE... TRAITORS!
GO AWAY THEN. BUT LISTEN
TO WHAT I'M SAYING, I'M GOING
TO BE FAMOUS, AND I'M GOING
TO BE FAMOUS PLAYING
MY SONGS!

I DON'T NEED THOSE LOSERS.
FOR TONIGHT, I GUESS WHAT
I HAVE LEFT IS TO TRY AND
HAVE SOME FUN...

RESTROOMS



RESTROOMS




HI THERE, PRETTY LADY!
CAN I BUY YOU A DRINK?



RESTROOMS


OH, HI! YOU WERE THE ONE SINGING, RIGHT? YOU'RE SO GOOD. I REALLY ENJOYED THE CONCERT!



A man with short, light-colored hair, wearing sunglasses, a dark jacket, and a dark t-shirt, stands in a club. He is smiling and gesturing with his right hand. A woman with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing a white, off-the-shoulder, ruffled dress, stands in front of him, seen from the back. The background features a brick wall, a bar area with stools, and tables with chairs. The lighting is dim with blue and red hues.

REALLY? THAT MAKES YOU MY
BIGGEST FAN TONIGHT. I GUESS
I'LL HAVE TO BUY YOU TWO DRINKS
THEN! I'M NICK, BY THE WAY.
NICK MOORE.


TEE-HEE NICE TO MEET YOU, NICK,
I'M MIN-JI. SORRY FOR MY BAD ENGLISH.
I'M HERE ON AN EXCHANGE PROGRAM
AND I DON'T KNOW THE LANGUAGE
VERY WELL YET.



나는 당신의
영어가 훌륭하다고
생각합니다!

WOW, SO YOU SPEAK KOREAN?
LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE A LOT IN
COMMON NICK-OPPA. I ALSO
LIKE TO SING AND WRITE SONGS,
YOU KNOW?

*I THINK YOUR ENGLISH IS GREAT!

A man with short, light-colored hair, wearing dark sunglasses and a black leather jacket over a dark t-shirt, stands in a dimly lit bar. He is looking towards a woman with long, dark hair who is partially visible on the right side of the frame. The background features a brick wall, several wooden chairs, and a row of small lights. A thought bubble is positioned to the left of the man, containing text.

GOD BLESS THE LOCAL COLLEGE FOR THIS EXCHANGE PROGRAM WITH KOREAN STUDENTS. AREN'T KOREAN GIRLS THE HOTTEST IN THE WORLD? JUST HEARING THIS CHICK CALL ME 'NICK-OPPA' MAKES ME SO EXCITED! IT REALLY PAID OFF TO LEARN HALF A DOZEN SENTENCES IN KOREAN...




CHAPTER ONE

INSPIRATION AND CREATION

THREE DAYS LATER...






ONCE AGAIN, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR INVITING US INTO YOUR STUDIO, NICK-OPPA. WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR PRODUCING AND RECORDING OUR SONG WITHOUT CHARGING US A PENNY! YOU'RE TOO KIND!

A man with short, light-colored hair and a goatee, wearing a black t-shirt with a white graphic of a crown and an eye, stands in a recording studio. He is gesturing with his right hand. In the background, there is a wooden piano and a mixing console with a small robot on it. The walls are covered in acoustic panels.

THAT WAS MY PLEASURE,
MIN-JI. IT'S ALWAYS NICE
TO HELP FELLOW ARTISTS
AND SONGWRITERS!

THANKS ANYWAY! IT'S
A REALLY NICE STUDIO YOU
HAVE HERE. I BET YOU'VE
SPENT A FORTUNE
BUILDING THIS.

A woman with dark, wavy hair, wearing a black choker and a light pink floral dress, sits on a brown couch. She is looking towards a man whose back is to the camera. The man has short, light brown hair and is wearing a black t-shirt. The background features a textured wall and a wooden door. A speech bubble is positioned in the lower-left corner of the frame.

I'VE INVESTED SOME MONEY IN EQUIPMENT AND SUCH, SURE, BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT I INHERITED THIS PLACE FROM MY UNCLE. GREAT GUY, UNCLE FRANK! HE HAD SOME ISSUES WITH GAMBLING, BUT HE MANAGED TO KEEP THIS PLACE UNTIL THE END, AND IT WAS HIS GREAT PRIDE! HE WAS THE ONE WHO GOT ME INTO ROCK MUSIC AND TAUGHT ME HOW TO PLAY GUITAR. MAN, I REALLY MISS THAT GUY!




WE'RE SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS,
NICK-OPPA. IT'S ALWAYS SAD TO LOSE
SOMEONE WE LOVE. I IMAGINE YOU STILL
HAVE YOUR PARENTS, THOUGH, AND THAT
THEY ARE VERY PROUD OF YOU. FAMILY IS
EVERYTHING, AFTER ALL.

MY PARENTS, PROUD OF ME?!
NOT IN A MILLION YEARS!


LET'S JUST SAY MY PARENTS WERE NEVER VERY HAPPY WITH MY LIFE CHOICES, SO WE WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS. I THINK THIS WAS BETTER FOR EVERYONE.



A man with short, light-colored hair and a beard is sitting in a wooden chair in a recording studio. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a white geometric design. He is gesturing with his hands as he speaks. In the background, there is a piano, a mixing console, and soundproofing panels. A woman with dark hair is seen from the back, looking towards the man. Two speech bubbles are present: one from the man and one from the woman.


BUT LET'S PUT THAT ASIDE, OKAY?
IN ANY CASE, I'M NOT AN EXPERT ON
POP MUSIC, BUT I FOUND THE SONG
YOU GIRLS RECORDED... INTERESTING!
FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND, YOU WERE
ONCE TRAINEES AT A RECORD LABEL IN
KOREA, RIGHT?

THAT'S RIGHT. WE TRAINED TOGETHER
FOR LIKE FOUR YEARS, BUT THEN, SADLY,
THE COMPANY WENT BANKRUPT BEFORE
WE COULD DEBUT. AS YOU CAN GUESS,
WE WERE HEARTBROKEN!



LIKE IN YOUR FAMILY, MY PARENTS WEREN'T TOO KEEN ON MY MUSIC CAREER EITHER, AND FOR A FEW YEARS I PUT THAT IDEA ASIDE AND WENT TO COLLEGE. JUST RECENTLY I GOT BACK TO WRITING SONGS, AND DASOM, EUNJOO AND I STARTED PRACTICING SOME CHOREOGRAPHIES AGAIN. IT WAS A GREAT LUCK THAT WE WERE CHOSEN IN THIS EXCHANGE PROGRAM TOGETHER. WE'RE STILL VERY CLOSE TO THIS DAY.

AT FIRST, WE WERE JUST DOING IT JUST FOR FUN, BUT THEN AN OPPORTUNITY AROSE...

A man with short, light-colored hair and a beard is sitting in a recording studio. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a white graphic of a crown and a face. He is gesturing with his hands as he speaks. Two women are sitting in front of him, one on the left wearing a red top and one on the right wearing a pink floral top. The background shows a mixing console and soundproofing panels.

YEAH... FROM WHAT YOU GIRLS TOLD ME, IT'S ALL ABOUT THAT T-PANDA GUY, RIGHT? I REMEMBER HIM EVEN THOUGH I'VE NEVER BEEN INTO K-POP. THAT FUNNY SONG HE WROTE BLEW UP ALL OVER THE WORLD A FEW YEARS AGO, AND WHEREVER YOU WENT IT WAS PLAYING NONSTOP!

EXACTLY. AND T-PANDA HAD ENOUGH OF THE IDOL LIFE AND DECIDED TO START HIS OWN RECORD LABEL. BUT THE THING IS, HE'S TRYING TO DO THINGS A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY THAN THE NORM IN KOREA. INSTEAD OF TRAINING IDOLS FOR YEARS AND YEARS ON END, HE IS LOOKING FOR "AMATEUR" GROUPS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN DEBUTING.

HE JUST ANNOUNCED A CONTEST TO CHOOSE THE COMPANY'S FIRST GROUP. SORT OF LIKE "THE VOICE", YOU KNOW? WITH GROUPS BEING VOTED ON WITHOUT PEOPLE SEEING THE MEMBERS' FACES.



THAT'S WHY WE NEED YOU TO
BE BRUTALLY HONEST WITH US,
NICK-OPPA.

DO YOU REALLY THINK OUR
SONG IS GOOD ENOUGH?




HMM... LIKE I SAID, I'M NOT A POP MUSIC EXPERT. I DO THINK, THOUGH, THAT THE SONG YOU GIRLS RECORDED IS... QUITE CATCHY...

BUT...?

WELL, BEING HONEST, I THINK SOMETHING IN THE VOCALS IS MISSING. DON'T GET ME WRONG, YOU GIRLS ARE IN TUNE AND CLEARLY KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, BUT THE SONG NEEDS SOME HIGH NOTES AND A MORE VIBRANT VOICE, ESPECIALLY IN THE LAST CHORUS.

WHEN WE WERE TRAINEES, WE HAD
A MAIN VOCALIST, A GIRL CALLED JIHOO.
YOU HAD TO HEAR HER SINGING... SHE WAS
GREAT! UNFORTUNATELY, THOUGH, SHE
LEFT THE GROUP EVEN BEFORE THE
COMPANY WENT OUT OF BUSINESS.



A man with short, light-colored hair and a beard, wearing a black t-shirt, is sitting in a recording studio. He is looking towards a large, professional mixing console with many sliders and buttons. A vintage-style microphone is positioned in front of the console. The studio walls are covered in acoustic foam. Two speech bubbles are overlaid on the image, containing text.

I SEE... WELL, WITH JIHOO OR NOT,
I BELIEVE YOU GIRLS CAN DO BETTER. LET'S
TRY FEW MORE TAKES. MAYBE YOU WERE JUST
A LITTLE NERVOUS BEFORE. JUST REMEMBER
TO FEEL WHAT YOU'RE SINGING, OKAY? THIS IS
REALLY IMPORTANT. I ONCE WITNESSED A GUY
DRINKING A WHOLE WEEK TO RECORD A SONG
ABOUT A MONSTER HANGOVER. FUN TIMES...
I WONDER HOW TOM IS DOING IN REHAB.

ANYWAY, ABOUT THE HIGH NOTES,
I THINK THE SONG WOULD NEED
SOMETHING LIKE THIS...

♪ ANNNNNN! ♪





WOW, MINJI-UNNIE WASN'T LYING WHEN SHE SAID YOU HAD AN AMAZING VOICE, NICK-OPPA!

HALF AN HOUR LATER...



OK, GIRLS...

I SHAVED OFF MY BEARD LIKE
YOU GUYS ASKED ME TO DO, BUT
I STILL DON'T SEE THE POINT
OF IT, YOU KNOW?





C'MON, NICK-OPPA, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID IT'S IMPORTANT TO FEEL WHAT ONE'S SINGING, RIGHT? AND YOU PROMISED TO RECORD THE LEAD VOCAL IN OUR SONG SINCE THERE'S SOMETHING LACKING, AND YOU CAN SING IN A PITCH AS HIGH AS OURS!


THAT WAY WE WILL HAVE MORE CHANCES IN THE CONTEST. AND UNTIL THE RECORD LABEL MAKES A DECISION, WE'LL HAVE TIME TO PRACTICE AND SING IDENTICALLY, OR AT LEAST CLOSE ENOUGH, TO YOUR RECORDING.

MINJI-UNNIE IS RIGHT. BUT EVEN
THOUGH YOU CAN SING A LOT BETTER
THAN US, YOU'RE NOT SOUNDING GENUINE,
NICK-OPPA. YOU'VE TRIED A LOT OF TAKES,
BUT EVEN SINGING IN A HIGH PITCH, YOU'RE
NOT SOUNDING LIKE A GIRL. THAT'S WHY
YOU NEED SOME... INSPIRATION.

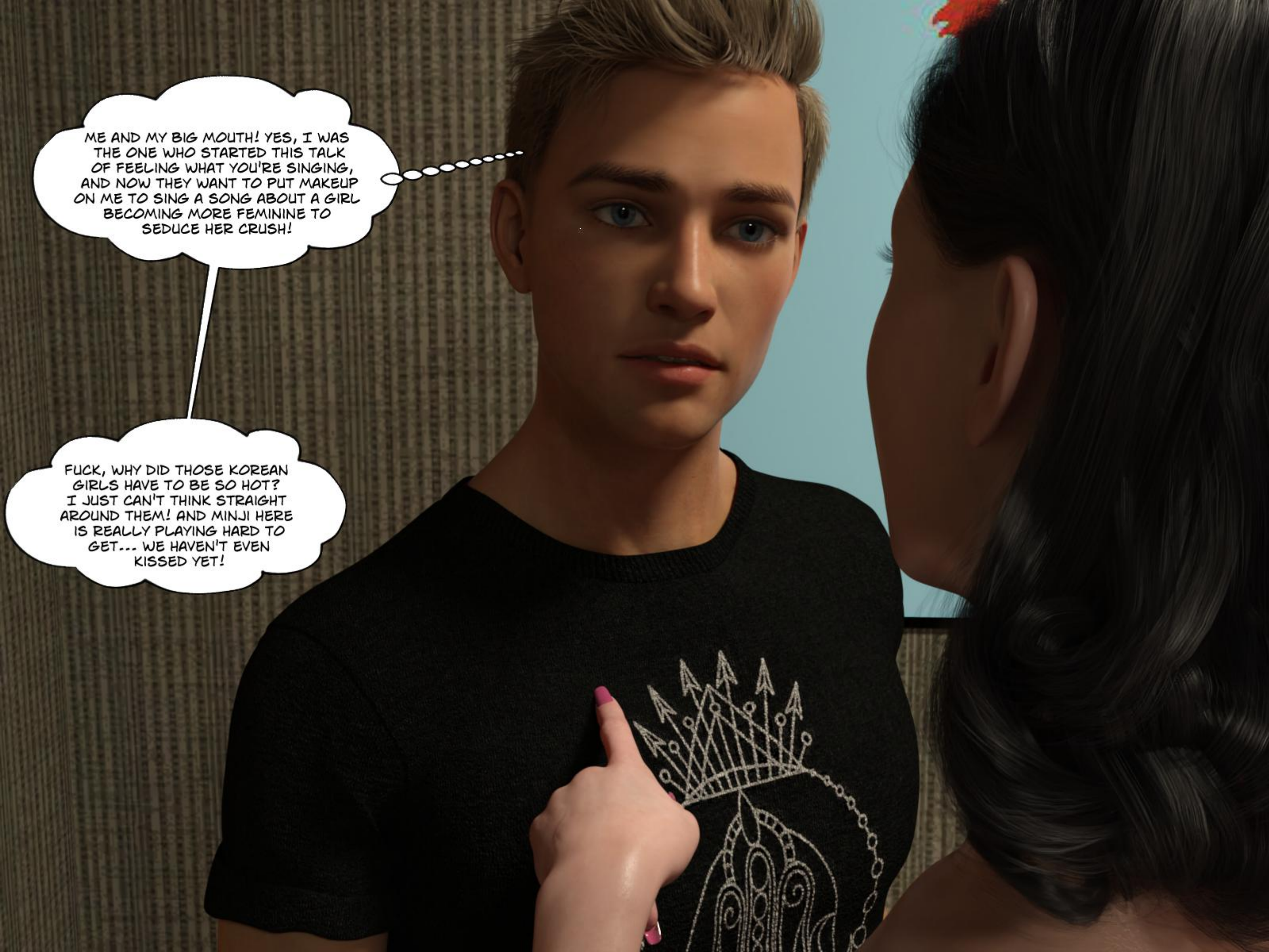




I UNDERSTAND, GIRLS,
BUT... MAKEUP?! ISN'T
IT A LITTLE TOO MUCH?



I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE SO RELUCTANT, NICK-OPPA. HOW HARD CAN IT BE FOR A MAN LIKE YOU? IT'S NOT LIKE A LITTLE MAKEUP WILL TURN YOU INTO A GIRL, RIGHT?



ME AND MY BIG MOUTH! YES, I WAS THE ONE WHO STARTED THIS TALK OF FEELING WHAT YOU'RE SINGING, AND NOW THEY WANT TO PUT MAKEUP ON ME TO SING A SONG ABOUT A GIRL BECOMING MORE FEMININE TO SEDUCE HER CRUSH!

FUCK, WHY DID THOSE KOREAN GIRLS HAVE TO BE SO HOT? I JUST CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT AROUND THEM! AND MINJI HERE IS REALLY PLAYING HARD TO GET... WE HAVEN'T EVEN KISSED YET!



SIGH FINE, LET'S DO THIS THEN!

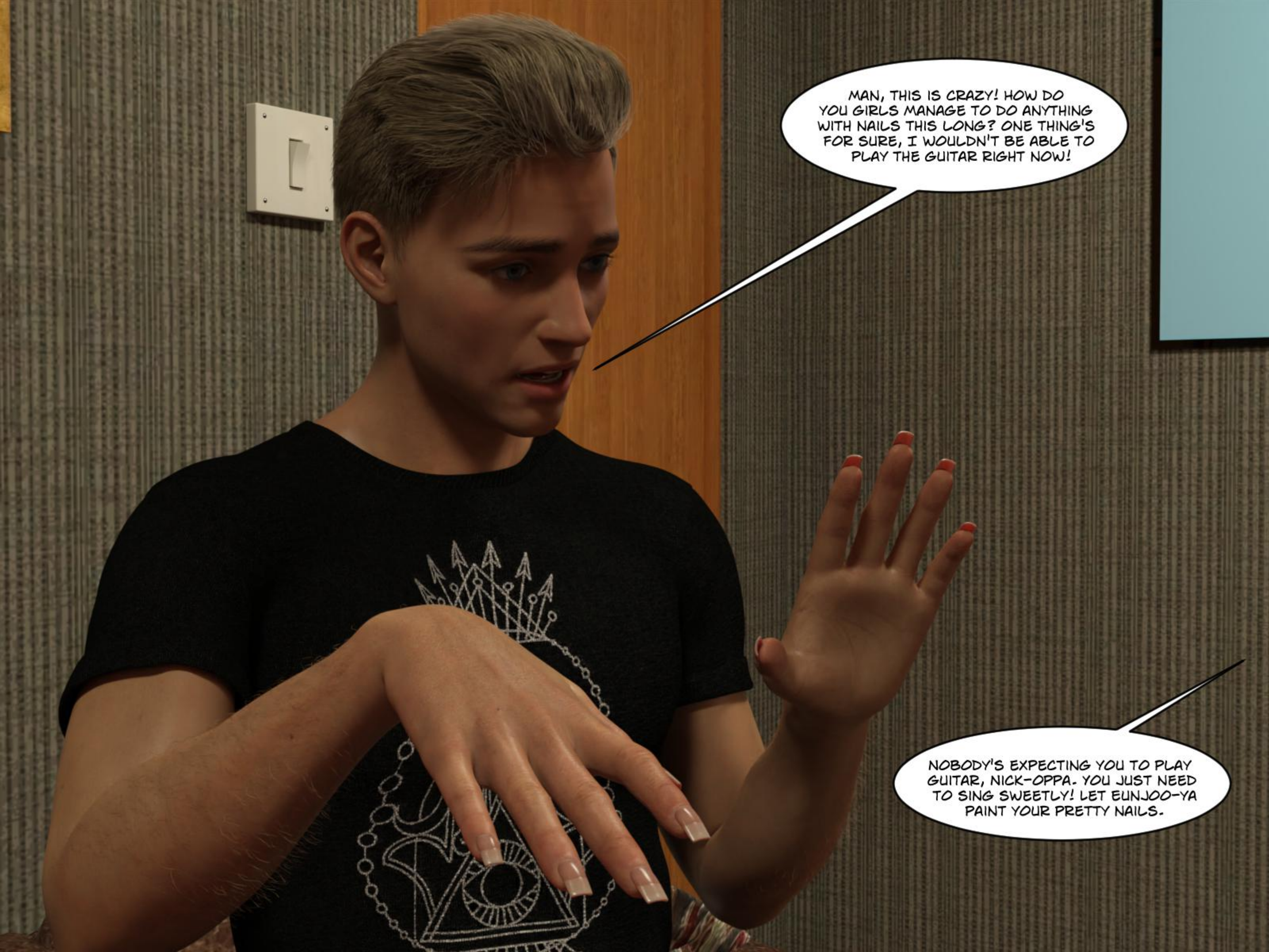


FABULOUS! I THINK WE SHOULD START WITH YOUR NAILS, THEN!

N-NAILS?!

A close-up photograph of a woman's hands. She is wearing a red, long-sleeved, ribbed top and a skirt with a red and white geometric pattern. Her hands are resting on a dark, textured surface. She has short, light-colored manicured nails. A speech bubble is positioned above her hands, containing text. The background is dark and out of focus.

I ALWAYS HAVE SPARE NAILS IN
MY PURSE BECAUSE A GIRL NEVER
KNOWS WHEN SHE'S GOING TO HAVE
AN ACCIDENT... ONE NAIL GLUED,
NINE TO GO!

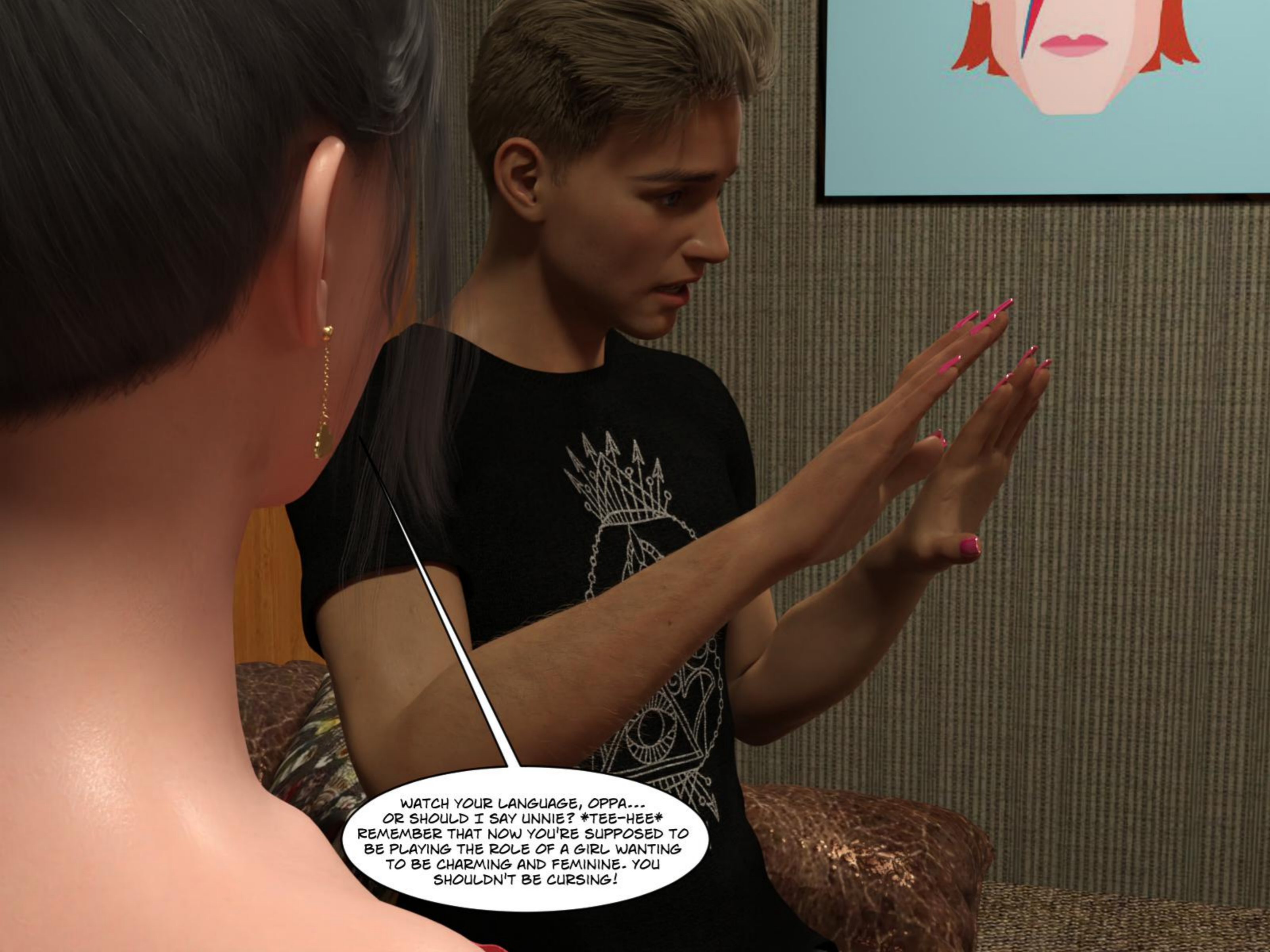


MAN, THIS IS CRAZY! HOW DO YOU GIRLS MANAGE TO DO ANYTHING WITH NAILS THIS LONG? ONE THING'S FOR SURE, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO PLAY THE GUITAR RIGHT NOW!


NOBODY'S EXPECTING YOU TO PLAY GUITAR, NICK-OPPA. YOU JUST NEED TO SING SWEETLY! LET EUNJOO-YA PAINT YOUR PRETTY NAILS.



OH FUCK...



WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE, OPPA...
OR SHOULD I SAY UNNIE? *TEE-HEE*
REMEMBER THAT NOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO
BE PLAYING THE ROLE OF A GIRL WANTING
TO BE CHARMING AND FEMININE. YOU
SHOULDN'T BE CURSING!

A woman with dark, wavy hair and a black choker with a heart pendant is shown from the chest up. She is wearing a light-colored, off-the-shoulder dress with a floral pattern. She has a slight smile and is looking towards the camera. Her right hand is raised, palm facing up, with her fingers slightly curled. The background consists of a textured wall and a wooden chair with a perforated backrest.

I KNOW WE'RE PUSHING A LOT,
OPPA, BUT THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT
TO US! WE'LL OWE YOU A BIG ONE.
SO, COULD YOU START TALKING LIKE
A GIRL? TO GET INTO CHARACTER,
YOU KNOW?

WHEN YOU KOREANS GET AN IDEA
IN YOUR HEAD, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
TO MAKE YOU FORGET
ABOUT IT, RIGHT?

CORRECT! COULD YOU TRY
THIS, PRETTY PLEASE?



L-LIKE THIS?

HMM... NOT BAD...