

I Became a Villainous Character with a Limited Lifespan - Episode 26 - 30

Episode 26

“Our deal is still valid even without the director’s information, isn’t it?”

“Well, that’s true. But it’s a bit of a waste of time coming here for nothing. I even took time out of my busy schedule.”

Hyeokjae grumbled, fully leaning back in the back seat. It was the first time he had seen Han Seung-hyun look so uninteresting in his life.

“I thought he would at least get fired up with competitiveness after seeing my face, even if it annoyed him. Are you really not going to tell me what happened?”

“It was clearly an important condition of our deal not to discuss the director’s personal matters. Have you already forgotten?”

“Ah. It’s really no fun. This is why I hate going around with this secretary.”

Although he had left the company, Seung-hyun had an inseparably close relationship with HJ. Anyway, he was Chairman Han’s grandson by family register and had been involved in many of HJ’s major projects.

His secretary, Lee Seok-hyung, was also like an information vault. The relationships between corporations were originally intertwined. Hyeokjae was not a fool to give up the benefits that had come his way.

“Yeah. Even if he says that, he’ll probably feel exhilarated seeing Han Tae-sung get hit. He might change his mind and return to the company as our secretary wants.”

“.....”

Seok-hyung pressed his lips together and focused on driving. It was unlikely that Seung-hyun would return to the company, but Seok-hyung had no intention of abandoning this plan.

‘He will definitely regret it later. It’s for that time. No one knows him better than me.’

He was confident that no one knew Seung-hyun as well as he did. The Seung-hyun that Seok-hyung knew was definitely not someone who would be satisfied with this ending.

“...You must keep your promise.”

“Don’t worry. It’s not like it’s a loss for me anyway. At most... I’m fine as long as I look good to our elder.”

Hyeokjae waved his hand as if telling him not to worry. The car carrying the two passed through a mountain road and entered the highway.

[“I also tried. I tried to like you too. But it didn’t work.”

“.....”

“I thought there was nothing that effort couldn’t do, but love, it turns out it’s not something that happens just because you try.”]

Seung-hyun, who had eaten dinner, was watching a movie on the large TV on the living room wall. Perhaps because it was an alpha-omega world setting. Dramas and movies were all stories with that subject.

[“No matter how hard I try, I can’t feel your pheromones, and I can’t even notice when you’re having a heat cycle and struggling. So I stupidly fall for the lie that you seem to have a cold.”

“That’s...”

“I know. It must have been for my sake. But I...”]

“So poignant. So poignant.”

Seung-hyun muttered, looking at the man crying and speaking in the TV. The co-star was also a man. It was still a bit unfamiliar to see such scenes, but indeed, this world was one where both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships were accepted as normal.

There were people who viewed relationships other than alpha and omega, or beta and beta negatively, but they were a minority. It was a perfect world setting for love.

Of course, it was still a story far from Seung-hyun. Naturally, Seung-hyun also had the desire to date. He was an affectionate person and had romantic dreams.

Coming into a world where dating between men was not an issue at all, he had naturally imagined such things.

But the time given to him was not very long. He had heard this somewhere before. The expiration date of love was about 18 to 30 months.

18 to 30 months. For Seung-hyun, it was long if long, short if short, but he didn't even have that much leeway. He wasn't sure if he could come to love someone in this world, but even if he did fall in love, it was a problem.

Then, wouldn't it become a bit difficult to think that it doesn't matter since he's going to die soon anyway? He felt like he would have lingering attachments. He might even come to resent the current situation.

Seung-hyun didn't want that. The time he had gained, even in this way, was too precious to think negatively and sink into sadness, and he didn't want to waste time on useless things.

'And if it does continue... that person will be left alone.'

Perhaps living might be more painful than dying. Seung-hyun thought like that and lightly rested his cheek on his knee.

["But how can we love each other? No matter how hard I tried, it didn't work. Reality, reality is... like that."]

"...I chose the wrong movie."

Seung-hyun shook his head and picked up the remote control. He pressed the back button on the movie screen he was watching and returned to the movie selection screen.

Isn't there anything fun instead of this gloomy content? Seung-hyun pressed the remote control and scanned the movie summaries. It would be nice if it was just funny, regardless of alphas or omegas.

After much consideration, he found a comedy movie that felt light from the poster and pressed the play button. Fortunately, it seemed he had chosen well this time.

["You didn't do it, so I came."

"Ack!"]

The content was one-dimensional, but that made it even more fun. It was perfect for passing the time since it could be watched without thinking deeply. Seung-hyun watched the movie while crunching on snacks on the sofa.

["You only live once. I have to take responsibility, will you take responsibility for me?!"]

He was immersed in the scene where the main characters were smashing the set while lying on the sofa. He especially liked the refreshingly cool action scenes that made the viewer feel completely refreshed.

'It kind of makes sense why Han Seung-hyun's mother wrecked the house...'

While watching the movie with useless thoughts, Seung-hyun instinctively groped for his cell phone but soon remembered that he had thrown it into the pool.

He had fished it out, but perhaps because it had been left in the water for a long time, it had completely turned into a brick, so it was useless to bring it.

'Well, I can do most things with the tablet anyway.'

Seung-hyun brought the tablet on the table and opened the screen. The webtoon screen he had been reading was paused at an important scene.

Except for calls and messengers, he could do most things with the tablet. If he had pre-installed the messenger app on the tablet, there would have been no problem with communication, but unfortunately, that wasn't the case.

'No. Do I need to call it unfortunate? There's nowhere important to contact anyway.'

The phone had more calls for annoying things he wanted to block rather than important contacts. If there was a contact he absolutely had to check, it would be the one from the hospital.

But he had visited the hospital yesterday, so there would be no problem for at least 3-4 days. He just had to inform them of the changed number only after getting a new phone.

But why did it bother him a bit that the useless phone had turned into a brick?

["Then is this mine now?"]

"Ah."

Seung-hyun, who had been thinking for a moment and missed an important part, raised his head and rewound the movie's playback bar.

'I said I'd invite him over after I get back. Will he be a bit worried?'

It was a bit unexpected to think of the person he had been steadily exchanging messages with, although it was too trivial to be an important contact.

It wasn't like he replied right away, and it wasn't like they communicated all day long. But when the phone actually became unusable, he felt a bit regretful about that contact.

'...Ju Jae-young was the only person I had a conversation with. Did I really think of him as a friend in my heart?'

Seung-hyun tilted his head and gulped down the cola next to him. At times like this, alcohol would be perfect, but he had to console his heart with soda, even if it was unsatisfactory.

"Eh. What's so important about that? If you don't have teeth, use your gums, think positively. There's so much I can do here, and you're hung up on just that."

Seung-hyun muttered words that no one would listen to and nodded. Jae-young probably didn't have such a significant weight in his existence either, so it must have been a temporary emotion stemming from wanting to have a conversation with a normal person after some thugs had come and gone.

'Or it could be because of the movie I mistakenly chose earlier...'

Seung-hyun shook his head, recalling a scene from the movie where the character was crying and lamenting about love. Whatever the reason, it wasn't a very significant emotion and it was something that shouldn't go deeper.

Tomorrow, he planned to finish the water activities he hadn't completed, and in the evening, he would stare blankly while stargazing and lighting a fire. Seung-hyun's house was also spacious and nice, but it was incomparable to the interior designed solely for healing.

'I should completely redo the interior when I go home. The current house lacks humanity too much. It darkens my mood just by looking at it.'

Seung-hyun looked around the interior of the pool villa to reference for the new interior. It seemed fun to directly design the house he would newly decorate.

"Change the password so anyone can't enter. No, I have a lot of money anyway, should I just move?"

As he started thinking about spending money, his heart started to flutter a bit. Before long, the movie took a back seat, and Seung-hyun, who installed a real estate app, started looking at houses.

"I always wanted to live in a duplex. Wouldn't it be okay if there's someone to manage it? Hmm. This house has a nice view..."

Seung-hyun looked at this house and that house, making happy decisions. A little later, Seung-hyun, who had impulsively decided to move, fell asleep with the movie as background music.

Episode 27

While Seung-hyun was quickly forgetting bothersome things and enjoying his time, something really uninteresting was happening in Seoul.

"Congratulations on the 50th anniversary of the company's founding, Chairman."

"Now that you have a proper grandson, you must have no more worries. If only my son took after Director Han even half as much. Haha."

All sorts of greetings poured in to Chairman Han, who briefly showed his face. Thanks to that, Tae-sung, who briefly escaped from annoying people, loosened his tie and sighed.

‘Even the people who were attached to Han Seung-hyun are now clinging as if nothing happened...’

He was sickened from having to face irksome faces he was already tired of. Tae-sung took advantage of the moment when attention was focused on Chairman Han to move to a less crowded area.

“Ah.”

But in the spot he had eyed in advance with few people, there was a guest. And not just any unwelcome guest.

“I want to be alone, could you please go somewhere else?”

“Anyone who sees this would think this place is Ju Jae-young’s private property.”

Tae-sung frowned upon seeing Jae-young holding a cigarette in one hand. Even if it was outdoors, smoking at an invited event. It was a manner that went against etiquette.

“Well, it’s fine as long as others don’t see, isn’t it?”

What does he mean the person clearly facing him right now isn’t someone else? At the strangely antagonistic tone, Tae-sung also wiped off his pretentious expression.

“You didn’t seem to want to come, so why did you make the unnecessary trip?”

“Our madam kept nagging me to come and at least show my face, saying this event was a gold mine.”

“Wasn’t it to see Seon-hu’s face one more time using that excuse?”

“Ah, right. Seon-hu.”

Jae-young finally remembered Seon-hu and opened his eyes a bit wide. How could he have forgotten Seon-hu? He was really surprised and dropped the hand holding the cigarette.

Until not long ago, Seon-hu was definitely Jae-young's number one priority. Even after Seon-hu got engaged to Tae-sung and married him, eliminating the possibility of being with him, that thought remained the same.

He had never been interested in anyone other than Seon-hu. It may have been natural since he had lived more than half his life thinking he would end up with him.

He also had a personality that once fixated on one thing, he wouldn't turn his eyes elsewhere for a while. But recently, that obvious fact started to crack.

An appearance so different from the rumors. That face, crying pitifully like a child, wouldn't leave his mind.

Sometimes his upturned eyes looked fierce to the point of looking vicious, but when he pressed his lips together and lowered his gaze, there was a strange atmosphere.

After surprising him like that and spending the night together, the next morning he woke up as if nothing happened and left him without hesitation, leaving words to spread rumors if he wanted to.

He was too intriguing to end it in one night. A person completely different from the rumors and also very different from the memories he had briefly encountered.

So when he heard from his mother that Seung-hyun had really quit the company and checked into Y Hotel, which was owned by his mother, in Busan, he felt the urge to directly confirm what kind of person Seung-hyun was.

It may have been a whim, but there were many memorable moments during the few days together. It was fun without having to fuss over this and that.

Seung-hyun was a more interesting person than he had thought. It was fascinating to see red lines being drawn one by one on the information he had known before.

'I thought he was a bit more interesting than others, but to the point of making me forget Seon-hu...'

It had to be even more so in the past few days. The replies were definitely coming slowly but steadily, but the message window that ended at an ambiguous point remained silent.

Even though he clearly knew there was no urgent business, he consoled himself thinking something must have come up and retraced his words countless times to see if he had misspoken.

As a result, he found himself reaching for cigarettes again, which he hadn't touched in a while. Feeling frustrated, he went back and forth on the message window several times, but couldn't bring himself to send a new message for fear of being thought of as bothersome.

'Did he block me?'

While spending time with that uneasy feeling, he was dragged by his mother to HJ's founding anniversary party. Even though he knew Seung-hyun wouldn't come, he looked around, got a bit annoyed, and came to a place with no people to smoke a cigarette, avoiding his mother's eyes.

But of all people, he had to run into someone he wouldn't be happy to see even in a good mood. Jae-young sighed right in front of Tae-sung's face.

"There was something I wanted to ask anyway."

Tae-sung was also uncomfortable. It hadn't been that long since he realized his feelings for Seon-hu, but he was his spouse and the person he loved.

The two may not have dated, but he at least remembered what kind of eyes Jae-young had at the wedding. Moreover, didn't he recently have one more reason to be suspicious of him?

"I heard you've been close with former director Han Seung-hyun recently."

"Ha."

Jae-young smirked and put the half-smoked cigarette back in his mouth. He found Tae-sung kindly pointing out something he was already concerned about quite unpleasant.

“I don’t know what you’re thinking, but don’t do anything useless. You, and former director Han...”

“I think you’re mistaken, but Han Seung-hyun has no particular interest in me.”

Jae-young spoke in a blunt tone. He didn’t like how Seung-hyun said it was okay to be friends and then suddenly stopped contact as if nothing happened.

Of course, it hadn’t been that long since they had a proper conversation, considering they had slept together. He knew that although they called it “friends,” it was actually a bit ambiguous to say that.

‘Still, isn’t it a bit too much to come out like this?’

Jae-young thought like that and stubbed out the shortened cigarette in the trash can ashtray.

“You’re quite suspicious too. I don’t think Han Seung-hyun would have directly told you that he spent time with me.”

“.....”

“Then I guess you also received a separate report on what we did, so you must know even better that nothing much happened, right?”

Tae-sung couldn’t refute Jae-young’s words and pressed his lips together. After glaring at Jae-young for a moment without answering, Tae-sung spoke.

“Since you say you know, I’ll speak bluntly.”

Tae-sung had no intention of looking good to Jae-young anyway. Although there was quite a bit of exchange with the Y Group, Jae-young was far from the succession structure, and Tae-sung had no business getting involved with Y Hotel.

So there was no need to manage his image.

“I don’t think you’re unaware of what kind of person former director Han is. Moreover, you had a very special relationship with Seon-hu. Wouldn’t it be nonsense even to you to think that you have favorable feelings towards me?”

Jae-young responded with a frown. Tae-sung continued, unperturbed.

“I don’t know why you two became close, but to former director Han...”

“He’s not a director anymore.”

“...Pardon?”

Jae-young, who was listening to Tae-sung’s words, took out a new cigarette but put the cigarette case back in his pocket. He was already feeling uneasy, and it wasn’t very pleasant to hear about Seung-hyun from someone else.

“Han Seung-hyun is no longer an HJ director, right? Calling him director Han at the end of every sentence. It’s a bit annoying to hear.”

‘Don’t call me Director. I quit the company and don’t want to be called that either. Just... call me by my name.’

Jae-young frowned, recalling what Seung-hyun had said in Busan. He kind of understood why Seung-hyun asked him not to call him Director.

He didn’t like the attitude of thinking that Seung-hyun must have done something wrong while calling him Director Han without actually doing anything.

“We just played together a bit. That’s all... I’m curious too. What Han Seung-hyun is thinking. I thought he would hang out with me, but suddenly contact is cut off.”

Jae-young said that and shrugged his shoulders. Anyway, what the madam wanted was for him to just show his face here and there, and he had already greeted the important people, so it wouldn’t be a big problem if he left secretly.

“Why didn’t you bring Seon-hu? He’s your spouse, nominally.”

“...I didn’t bring him for fear that he would hear unpleasant things from the chairman if I brought him for no reason.”

Aha, Jae-young also knew the fact that Chairman Han was an extreme trait discriminator. Although he brought him in out of necessity, there was no way he would like a passionate son-in-law.

“It would have been nice to see him after a long time. Then please give my regards to Seon-hu.”

Jae-young said that and turned around. He had already endured as much as he needed to be here, and Seung-hyun, whom he had hoped for, wasn't here either. He didn't want to see the unpleasant face for long, so he thought it would be better to leave now.

"...It's not like he's going around with that face."

At that moment, when he was about to turn and leave, Tae-sung's small mutter caught Jae-young's ankle. 'With that face'. It seemed trivial, but for some reason, it bothered him.

After contemplating for a moment, Jae-young turned back and asked Tae-sung,

"...Whose face are you talking about?"

Episode 28

"I had a good time."

"Yes. Please drive safely. About your phone... will you really be okay?"

"I need to get a new one as soon as I arrive in Seoul. Thank you for your concern."

Seung-hyun greeted the caretaker and got into the car. The plan was to get a new phone first, then go home and rest for a day before searching for a new house again.

Seung-hyun, who returned to Seoul while playing music on his tablet and driving, went straight into a phone store that caught his eye.

'Originally he wouldn't let me buy from just anywhere, but...'

Once you die, penalties and whatnot all disappear. Plus, the penalties were trivial compared to his current account balance anyway.

It should be fine as long as he goes to an official store. Seung-hyun entered the store with that thought.

"Yes. Welcome. Are you looking for a particular model?"

An employee who was eating something put down the bowl and spoke to Seung-hyun. Seung-hyun took out his phone that had become a decoration from his pocket.

'This seems to be the latest model too.'

"Do you have the same model as this?"

"Oh, is that the phone you were using?"

The employee took the phone and tried pressing the power button. Seung-hyun looked down at the phone that wouldn't turn on and said,

"It's completely submerged, so I want to buy a new one."

"Ah... this is the latest model, have you been to the service center?"

"No. I'm planning to change my number anyway, so I just want to buy a new one. There's no important data in it."

If someone who knew how amazing the data contained in that phone heard that, they would be dumbfounded. But to Seung-hyun, they were just useless documents and photos taking up data.

"Ah... then did you originally use our carrier?"

"Yes. Probably."

Seung-hyun said, recalling the carrier logo that had been on the top bar of the phone. The employee obtained some personal information such as Seung-hyun's name and number he used for verification.

"Ah. You changed your phone not long ago."

"I want to keep the model and plan the same as before, and only change the number. Is that possible?"

"Yes. Then I'll process it that way. Please wait a moment. Should I bring you something to drink?"

"It's okay."

The employee looked a bit excited at Seung-hyun's refreshing attitude and tapped on the keyboard. Before long, the employee peeped his head out from the monitor and asked,

"Should I set the number similar to the one you used before? There's a number available with the same last digits and only the middle two digits are different..."

"No. Just change it completely."

Seung-hyun shook his head. He had to change it to a number that couldn't be predicted. He couldn't get used to the previous number anyway.

"Can I use this number?"

"Let's see... ah, yes. It's available."

Fortunately, when he presented the number he used in his original body, the answer came back that it was an available number. The employee who was changing the number asked one more thing.

"Should I set it so that a text is sent notifying the number change when contacting the existing number?"

"No. It's not necessary."

"You'll be inconvenienced since your existing contacts aren't backed up, are you sure you'll be okay?"

"Yes."

At the firm answer, the employee soon nodded. It seemed it would be inconvenient, but it was someone else's business anyway. As long as the work is handled well. The employee, quickly erasing his curiosity, handed over the phone after finishing the work.

"It's done. The number has been set as you requested. We don't have any backed up data, so it's a completely new phone. It's activated and ready to use right away."

"Thank you."

Seung-hyun, who got a new phone faster than expected, immediately turned on the phone screen. The battery wasn't at one hundred percent, but it was enough to not be a problem on the way home.

"If there are any issues, please call the number on the business card inside. Thank you-."

Seung-hyun got back into the car while being seen off by the employee. He quite liked the phone that was cleanly emptied with only the default apps installed.

'Now at least I won't get any annoying calls.'

He had also looked around the study at home while playing. He remembered the first drawer being packed with all sorts of business cards. He didn't know in detail because he didn't go into the study often, but there must be various information on the desktop in that room too.

If he searched well, could Jae-young's phone number be among them? Seung-hyun thought like that and stepped on the accelerator towards home.

After parking in the garage, Seung-hyun passed through the garden that was well-maintained even while he was away and started moving the luggage piled up in the trunk.

"Ah, I moved everything."

It wasn't that much, but it was enough to require a couple of trips. If he roughly left it here, the madam would organize it. Seung-hyun, who had become accustomed to a life with a housekeeper, connected his phone to the charger and sprawled on the sofa.

Ding dong!

How long had it been? Seung-hyun, who had been spacing out for a while, raised his head at the sound of the doorbell. Thanks to lying on the sofa, too lazy to even move from the living room, he could immediately confirm the identity of the visitor through the intercom.

"...Ju Jae-young?"

He was going to rest for a bit and then find the contact information in the study. They say even a tiger comes when you talk about it, but did it come even just by thinking, not talking?

Seung-hyun cautiously walked towards the intercom, doubting his eyes. Perhaps because it was a nice house, the intercom image quality was very clear, so Seung-hyun could soon tell that the person shown through the screen was not a mistake.

‘Should I open it or not?’

It wasn’t that he hadn’t thought of meeting Jae-young, but this was a situation Seung-hyun hadn’t expected. He had never told him the address, so how did he find it without any contact?

‘Ah, it’s not that he didn’t contact me, but that he couldn’t.’

Seung-hyun glanced down at the charging phone and pressed the intercom call button.

“What is it? Not only no contact... no. I never even told you my address.”

—I heard it from Director Han Tae-sung.

No, why did that guy tell someone else’s address without permission? After pondering for a moment with his hand on his forehead, Seung-hyun said,

“...Come in for now.”

Only after unlocking the front door did the items scattered here and there catch his eye. Seung-hyun briefly thought about whether the house was a bit dirty to let a guest in, but soon turned his gaze away. He thought it didn’t matter if it was a bit dirty.

“Not only the person who told you, but why did you come all the way here...”

He was going to let him in and talk since the night air was chilly, but Jae-young, who entered the house, approached Seung-hyun with quick strides without a word.

Seung-hyun, who shut his mouth, overwhelmed by his momentum, soon had his face grabbed by Jae-young.

“What, what are you doing...?”

Seung-hyun blinked, startled by Jae-young who grabbed both cheeks with one hand and turned his face this way and that.

“Are you okay?”

“About what?”

“This.”

Jae-young removed the hand holding his face and carefully stroked one side of Seung-hyun’s cheek. Only then did Seung-hyun realize what he was talking about and touched his face that Jae-young had stroked.

“You probably can’t see it well anyway.”

Now there was a faint bruise under there that was almost completely faded and hard to see unless you looked closely. Seung-hyun, who fiddled with his face for a moment, raised his head again.

“Did you come because of this?”

“Yes.”

“How did you know?”

“...I attended the founding anniversary party and heard it from Director Han Tae-sung. You don’t answer contact, but the last person who saw you says such things.”

“What did he say?”

The last people who saw him were Seok-hyung and Hyeokjae, but it didn’t seem like Jae-young would have met those two, and judging from what he was saying, it seemed he heard something from Tae-sung.

Moreover, he had met Tae-sung before when the bruise hadn’t completely faded.

“He said former Chairman Han laid hands on you for quitting the company. When I asked what he meant, saying your face would be in no condition to go out, he answered like that.”

“Ah...”

If he knew I was living as a shut-in because I didn't want to show my bruised face, he should shut his mouth, why was he blabbering about it? Seung-hyun let out a small sigh.

“And why... didn't you answer?”

“My phone broke. I told you in advance that I had the pool villa booked until today.”

“You did. But you didn't go to the remote mountains with no signal, so no reply. When I tried calling just in case, it kept saying the phone was turned off. On the way here, it even said the number doesn't exist...”

“I changed my number. Since the phone completely died anyway, I thought it would be good to get rid of annoying contacts all at once.”

Seung-hyun said nonchalantly. Was it his imagination that Jae-young's shoulders seemed to slump a bit at the words “annoying contacts”? Seung-hyun looked at him for a moment.

He must have known that Seung-hyun was returning home today since he had mentioned the schedule before. But he didn't understand why he had to go this far.

Of course he would be concerned after hearing he was hit. Even more so if contact couldn't be made. But still, were we close enough for him to come all the way to my house?

“...Ju Jae-young.”

“Yes?”

“So why did you really come here?”

Seung-hyun asked, looking up at Jae-young. At Seung-hyun's question, Jae-young, who made eye contact with him, froze as if a pause button had been pressed.

Translation Notes:

1 More free chap today, Happy Father's Day to all fathers!

Episode 29

Jae-young blinked at Seung-hyun's question and tried to recall why he came all the way here. A reason. He hadn't come thinking of such a thing.

When he asked like that, Tae-sung had a somewhat flustered expression. He let out a small sigh and tried to change the subject.

"Never mind. It was just me talking to myself."

"If you say it loud enough for others to hear, is that talking to yourself?"

Jae-young spoke with a slightly anxious feeling. He had an uneasy feeling that the face of "someone" might be the face of someone he knows.

"...Then let me ask one thing. Is that "someone" Han Seung-hyun?"

The words didn't come back, but even a brief flinch was enough of an answer. Jae-young reflexively grabbed Tae-sung's shoulder.

"What's with his face? Did something happen?"

"Let go and talk."

Tae-sung, lightly brushing off that hand, frowned and looked at Jae-young. He had heard that Jae-young and Seung-hyun had gone around together in Busan as if they were sightseeing. Before that, they had even met in a private room.

He thought there must be some ulterior motive since neither of them were the type to take a liking to him, but Jae-young's attitude now was slightly different from treating a colleague.

"Former Chairman Han wouldn't just sit back and watch former Director Han quit the company, right?"

"Then..."

"I don't know the details either."

"When was the last time you saw him?"

“...It was Tuesday.”

If it was Tuesday, it was still when he could contact Seung-hyun. But even when he contacted him before and after that, there was nothing unusual.

He just talked casually and said that when he returns to Seoul, he would finally take him on a department store tour this time.

“...Have you been able to contact him since then?”

“Former Director Han and I aren’t on terms to contact each other for personal matters.”

Jae-young tapped the phone in his pocket with his finger. Seung-hyun who couldn’t be contacted, Seung-hyun whose face was a mess on Tuesday.

“Do you know where Han Seung-hyun lives?”

“Even if I do, why should I tell that to you, Ju Jae-young?”

It was a reasonable answer. But Jae-young was always a person who acted as he was drawn rather than reason.

“You know what kind of relationship those two have.”

“...They have that sort of relationship.”

“...Pardon?”

At Jae-young’s words, Tae-sung’s mouth opened slightly. Did he mishear it, no. He must have misheard it.

“I think I misheard. Could you say it again?”

“I said they have that sort of relationship.”

Ambiguous but suspicious-looking relationship. It must be a joke, must be a joke. Tae-sung thought so and spoke again.

“If someone hears it... they might think you two are in some grand relationship.”

“What kind of grand relationship?”

“I mean, they might think you two shared a bed.”

“What if that’s true?”

Thud. Tae-sung dropped the phone he was holding on the floor. He thought it would be a lie, but Jae-young’s attitude didn’t seem so.

“Then do I have the right to ask now? Where does Han Seung-hyun live?”

Jae-young asked again. It wasn’t an action taken after long thought. He just thought he had to somehow check on Seung-hyun’s condition.

But when he heard Seung-hyun’s question, he finally wondered why he went that far. He hadn’t thought about how Tae-sung would view his relationship with Seung-hyun before doing it.

“That’s... just...”

“Just?”

“Isn’t it natural? When a person can’t be reached and the last person who saw him says his face was a mess. It seems a bit hasty to report to the police. Since he said he’d return home today, I came to check if he came home...”

Jae-young rambled a bit, listing the reasons for his actions.

“Aren’t we friends? Can’t friends worry about each other to that extent?”

“Well... you can worry if a friend disappears, but.”

Isn’t it a bit much? Seung-hyun looked at Jae-young with strange eyes. But that was only for a moment, there was something more important.

“How did you get my home address from Director Han Tae-sung? No matter how little loyalty or whatever Han Tae-sung has towards me, he doesn’t seem like someone who would leak someone’s personal information so easily.”

“Ah, that.”

Small beads of cold sweat formed on Jae-young's forehead. At the time, he couldn't think deeply because he had to get the necessary information right away, but not now.

"That... I talked to him well."

"You two aren't even close, right? I don't think he has a reason to tell you."

"That's..."

"What, did you trade my information for something?"

"No!"

Jae-young, who was flustered, immediately denied Seung-hyun's words. Jae-young spoke with a serious face.

"Why would I do such a thing? Do I seem like someone who would do that?"

"Ah, no. It's just that there's no reason for Director Han Tae-sung to tell you unless you did something like that."

Seung-hyun stuttered, a bit flustered by the excessive reaction to the words he had thrown out casually. Seeing Seung-hyun like that, Jae-young pondered for a moment.

'I'll meet Director Han again anyway, so rather than having him hear it from someone else's mouth, it's better to confess...'

But if he heard that he said they had that sort of relationship and even slept together, he would naturally be angry.

'Why did I do that? Anyway, this damn habit of seeing nothing else once I'm fixated on one thing, I need to fix it...'

Jae-young belatedly reflected on his rashness, but it was already too late. After pondering for a long time, Jae-young opened his mouth, thinking it would be better to be honest after all.

"...I said that."

"What did you say?"

Seung-hyun, who couldn't understand the mumbling voice, asked again. Jae-young, who took a small deep breath, said,

"I told him I was curious because we had that sort of relationship."

Seung-hyun blinked at Jae-young's words. What nonsense is this crazy guy spouting now?

'No, I said let's be friends, did I ever say let's date?'

"...Did I perhaps drunkenly ask you to date me?"

"No. That's... um, I was in a hurry. I'm sorry. To Director Han Tae-sung, I'll..."

"No, wait a minute. Let me think."

Seung-hyun stopped Jae-young's words and was lost in thought for a moment. He thought it might be better to let Tae-sung, who doubted him at every turn, think that way.

There was no need to lie either. Anyway, he had just kept quiet without adding a word, so he could ignore it as if he knew nothing, as he had done until now.

"Just let him think that way."

"Pardon?"

"I said just leave him to think that way. He won't contact me to confirm the truth anyway. Ah, now he has no way to contact me either."

Rather, Jae-young was taken aback by Seung-hyun's casual words. He thought he would definitely be angry, but he looked calm as if it had nothing to do with him.

"...You don't mind being known like that?"

"It's bothersome to correct it, and if Director Han Tae-sung thinks I'm dating an alpha, he'll feel a bit relieved too, right? Like his father, he must have been thinking about the possibility of his child being born as a dominant alpha."

Of course, such a thing would never happen. If he thought the reason for suddenly quitting work and enjoying daily life was a love escapade, it seemed fine.

“Well, I’m not happy that someone who wasn’t even told the address suddenly barged in.”

“.....”

“It’s good you didn’t file a missing person report first. It would have become more bothersome for nothing. And... it’s a bit absurd, but it seems like a good method too.”

Seung-hyun nodded as he said that. Seeing that, Jae-young felt a slight discomfort from Seung-hyun.

‘No matter how tired he is of the succession competition in a chaebol family, does he need to be this indifferent to his own affairs?’

It was an attitude that anything was fine except for the bothersome things. Jae-young stared blankly at such Seung-hyun for a long time.

“Ah, I completely changed my phone since it got submerged. All the contacts were lost at once since there was no backup. I’m going to set all the messenger apps to the new number, so don’t find it strange if I disappear.”

“Ah...”

Seung-hyun left Jae-young like that and picked up the phone that was charging. The phone, which hadn’t changed from the default settings yet, opened without needing to unlock it.

“Here.”

“Yes?”

“Phone number.”

Seung-hyun held out his phone to Jae-young. Jae-young looked down at the phone for a moment, then belatedly grasped the situation and picked up the phone.

Ring- ring-.

Jae-young entered his number and immediately pressed the call button. The phone in Jae-young’s pocket vibrated a couple of times and then stopped.

“Then, what about the other phone book?”

“I have no intention of filling the phone book. Especially with the numbers of people I knew before.”

I should throw away all the business cards and contacts in the study when I move. Seung-hyun thought so and saved Jae-young’s phone number.

“Then... am I the only one in your phone book?”

Jae-young asked, watching Seung-hyun tap on the phone screen. Seung-hyun, who pressed the save button, raised his head and looked at Jae-young.

Episode 30

“Hmm, when the housekeeper starts work, I’ll get her phone number, so until then, I guess that’s how it will be.”

“When does the housekeeper start work?”

“The day after tomorrow.”

It was special treatment for just a little over 24 hours. But Jae-young felt his heart flutter for some unknown reason that he became the only person saved in the phone book even for that short period of time.

“I need to ask if she can still take care of the house after I move.”

“Pardon?”

“I’m going to move. As soon as possible. I don’t like people coming without notice, and this house feels too desolate.”

At Seung-hyun’s words, Jae-young turned his head and looked around the house. Some parts had things scattered about, but other than that, it was almost eerily neat and tidy.

It seemed to be not just because the cleaning and organizing were done well, but also because of the monochrome interior.

“Where do you plan to go?”

“I was in the middle of looking for a place.”

“Hmm... There’s no neighborhood you particularly prefer or anything?”

“I just want a comfortable place. Since I have several cars, it would be nice to have ample parking space.”

Seung-hyun said, recalling his cars lined up in the parking lot. He didn’t necessarily have to go to a mansion with a garage, but it was quite a good feeling to change cars and drive around according to his mood and needs.

‘As I kept driving, it became fun...’

“I did look at a few places through an app but haven’t decided yet.”

“You should look for a house by going directly. Besides having ample parking, is there anything else you want?”

“I’m thinking of completely redoing the interior, so I don’t want something dark like this house, and I want to go somewhere I won’t run into people I know.”

Seung-hyun went and sat on the sofa. Seung-hyun picked up the tablet again and showed Jae-young the house he was looking at.

“What do you think? For now, this is the place I like the most.”

“This place... would be quite far from where you live now.”

“That doesn’t matter. I used to live close to the company anyway, and now I won’t be going to the company anymore.”

Seung-hyun said, shrugging his shoulders. In fact, the biggest reason he wanted to leave this place was because this house was close to Chairman Han’s house.

‘That damn old fart... I don’t want to run into him even by chance.’

“Is this the only candidate? You’re not doing any remodeling or anything?”

“Remodeling... takes a long time, doesn’t it?”

I don’t even know if I’ll be alive by the time that’s finished. Seung-hyun flipped through the tablet screen.

“This one and this one also seem nice. But I’m also thinking this one is a bit iffy since it’s not in Seoul...”

“I like this one.”

Jae-young, who was looking at the screen, suddenly grabbed the tablet to stop Seung-hyun from flipping the screen. It was a house he was slightly hesitant about because the conditions were good but it wasn’t in Seoul.

“It’s close by highway anyway. Look how well-connected the roads are here. The garden is pretty too, doesn’t it look relaxing? And there aren’t many people living in this neighborhood, so there won’t be any bothersome issues to get entangled in either.”

“That’s true, but... It seems inconvenient for the housekeeper to commute to work too. It’s a hassle to find a new one.”

It’s more comfortable with the original person working. Seung-hyun thought that while looking at the screen Jae-young had stopped on.

He did have a longing for a garden. That’s why he had bookmarked it while mainly looking in Seoul, but it wasn’t a priority house.

“If that’s the problem, I can introduce you to a new person.”

“...I’m asking just in case.”

A hypothesis flashed through Seung-hyun’s mind as he was quietly listening to Jae-young’s words. Seung-hyun asked, looking at Jae-young’s face.

“Do you happen to live around here?”

“My, my. You’re quick-witted too.”

Jae-young shrugged his shoulders right away without denying it.

‘No wonder he talked as if he knew the place so well.’

“To be exact, it’s not my house but my family home is in this area.”

“Where does Mr. Ju Jae-young live then?”

“Let’s just say it’s a 20-minute distance from my family home.”

Seung-hyun turned his gaze away from Jae-young and looked at the tablet screen again. He had hesitations because it was a suburb rather than the city center, but he thought it might be okay if someone he knew was nearby.

‘Meals can be resolved by changing the housekeeper to someone who comes to work often, and I don’t plan to stay home often anyway... Having a pretty garden might make me feel different even while at home.’

After thinking for a bit, Seung-hyun nodded his head.

“Then I should go see this place first tomorrow.”

“I should also stop by my family home for the first time in a while.”

In fact, it hadn’t been that long since Jae-young had visited his family home, but he added a word with the intention of obviously following Seung-hyun.

Seung-hyun had no intention of refusing the transparently obvious statement, but he felt a question again from that action.

Coming all the way to the house to find someone who had lost contact was definitely something even a friend could do. Although he wasn’t a friend he had known for very long.

But no matter how much of a good-for-nothing human Ju Jae-young was compared to the original Han Seung-hyun, he shouldn’t have absolutely no schedule. Offering to even help look for a house, not moving, wasn’t that being too nosy?

“Mr. Ju Jae-young. Do you not have friends?”

“Pardon?”

“I’m asking if you don’t have people to hang out with.”

Jae-young made a dumbfounded face and pointed to himself. Asking if he had no friends. There wasn’t a lack of people around him, although there was no one he could call a close friend.

“Is that why you’re paying so much attention to me?”

“No. That’s not...”

“Then do you always pay this much attention to the people who come when you call them too?”

Seung-hyun asked in a rather serious tone. He let it slide without much thought earlier, but not this time.

“That’s...”

Jae-young looked a bit confused. It was definitely being too nosy. It started out of curiosity, but there was no need to want to put Seung-hyun in his life’s radius for that reason.

There was a clear difference between worrying about not being able to contact someone and wanting to keep them by your side. Jae-young, who had to judge his feelings once again, fell into thought for a moment.

“I do pay more attention to Mr. Han Seung-hyun compared to other people.”

“Why?”

“Because you’re so different from what I thought, I’m curious too. Also...”

He thought he had his reasons, but when he tried to explain, the reasons were too flimsy. Why did he end up paying more attention to Seung-hyun in particular?

Jae-young faltered, unable to easily organize his words. Seung-hyun, who was watching him, unconsciously asked.

“Do you perhaps like me?”

It was a lightly thrown remark. A remark thrown without much thought, like a joke. Although he was curious why Jae-young paid attention to him, whatever the reason was, it wasn’t something for him to get involved in.

But the moment he saw Jae-young’s face stained with embarrassment at those words, Seung-hyun felt something had gone wrong.

“.....”

He thought it would naturally be answered with a no or what are you talking about, but Jae-young didn’t answer at all.

But sometimes, things other than words could also become answers. Like the faint redness that rose on the face stained with embarrassment, or the body that had completely stiffened, unable to answer easily.

“Wait a moment.”

Seeing that, Seung-hyun spoke first before Jae-young could answer. He was the one who asked, but he didn't ask expecting an answer in the first place.

“Just don't answer. Don't even think about it. Just forget it.”

Seung-hyun waved one hand. It seemed unbelievable, but if that was true, it would be a big deal.

“Why? Didn't you say it doesn't matter if Director Han thinks of us as a couple?”

“That's about how the relationship appears externally, and this is a different issue, isn't it?”

The fact that a negative answer didn't come back right away was already a risk factor, and that attitude was even more dangerous. Seung-hyun hurriedly added before Jae-young could answer.

“Don't like me. If you feel like such feelings might develop, give up as quickly as possible.”

“.....”

“What I need is a friend, not a lover. I don't want a person for that kind of relationship. Not now, and never will in the future either.”

Seung-hyun spoke bluntly to an excessive degree. He could just leave, but the person left behind had a future. The time that might or might not be 1 year was too short for the person left behind.

“...That's unique. You don't need a lover, but sleeping together was okay?”

“It may vary from person to person... but for me, it is. Aren't a relationship that can be enjoyed for a day and a lover different?”

Seung-hyun nonchalantly spat out words that could possibly hurt Jae-young's feelings. He couldn't tell if Jae-young really harbored feelings for him or not, but even if he did, it probably wouldn't be anything grand yet.

'It's okay to be a bit over the top. The sprout that will become a nuisance must be cut off clearly in advance.'

"Sleeping together is something that means nothing to me. But if I get a lover, I would have to put meaning even into that trivial act. I hate that."

It was okay to seem a bit unpleasant and lose affection. It was right to cut off feelings that shouldn't develop from the very beginning.

"So if you're expecting something like that, don't be friends with me and go to the people you said come when you call them."

Seung-hyun spoke with a serious face. He thought Jae-young would have sufficiently understood since he wasn't a stupid person.

However, without realizing that the easiest rejection method hadn't even crossed his mind, Seung-hyun made eye contact with Jae-young as if telling him to answer quickly, after listing only long excuses.