

I Became a Villainous Character with a Limited Lifespan

- Episode 61 - 70

Episode 61

“Are you a little calmer now?”

“.....”

“Drink this.”

Jae-young stayed by Seung-hyun’s side for a long time until his tears stopped. By the time his tears had stopped and only awkwardness and embarrassment remained, Jae-young, who had briefly left the room, handed Seung-hyun a glass of water.

Seung-hyun smiled slightly at the familiar attitude as if it were his own home.

“Ah...”

Suddenly he realized how he must have looked. Getting angry and crying without giving a reason, then suddenly laughing. He must look like a strange person after all. Seung-hyun lowered his head again. Seeing that, Jae-young shrugged and said,

“Is there more to be embarrassed about at this point?”

“...I’m sorry.”

Seung-hyun offered a late apology. The situation he found himself in wasn’t something that could be taken lightly even as a joke, but that wouldn’t be a reason to keep hurting Jae-young every time.

‘It’s contradictory. Even though I know...’

“I must not be in my right mind either.”

Jae-young said, looking at Seung-hyun. Since he came of age, there were always too many people around Jae-young. Most wanted to be friends with him without even trying, and while there were annoying things because of people, he had never clung to anyone himself first.

If it were someone else, even if they had something to hide, he wouldn't have cared. When they pushed him away, he would have left as they pushed him away.

"I don't see the negative parts, and I only see the parts I want to see."

But now it was different. He knew Seung-hyun wanted to push him away, but rather than the hand pushing him away, the shaking gaze caught his eye more.

He had no words to refute even if he was mocked for only seeing what he wanted to see.

"If all it takes is not saying those words, I won't. No matter what I'm called... it's okay."

Actually, it wasn't completely okay, but if he could stay by his side even with that name, it was okay. It was just an excuse that he was worried about leaving him alone. He just wanted to believe that the timid Seung-hyun would one day break through his fears and come out.

'Waiting is always familiar anyway.'

"So don't force yourself to say things like that. I won't believe you anyway."

This time, the waiting was at least in a state where he knew the other person also liked him. He could wait as long as it takes.

A relationship where he could be by his side as long as he didn't say he loved him. Even though he thought it was contradictory, he was glad.

Because that wasn't a difficult thing.

"You still have a little fever."

'Your pheromone balance is unstable right now, causing the fever, so I'll prescribe you some medication, but you may have a low-grade fever for a day or two.'

Seung-hyun recalled what the nurse had told him. Since he couldn't tell the truth, he gave a plausible excuse.

"...I have a bit of a cold. It's not a high fever, so this much is okay."

“Then you should rest more. When is the housekeeper coming?”

“Tomorrow...”

“There’s nothing for a sick person to eat.”

“I have no appetite... it’s fine.”

Jae-young, who had been looking at Seung-hyun shaking his head for a while, got up from his seat. Then, rolling up his sleeves, he said,

“That’s all the more reason to eat well. Wait. You can sleep some more too.”

“Where are you...”

Jae-young left the room before Seung-hyun could finish. Seung-hyun looked at the closed door for a moment and pulled the blanket up to the tip of his head.

He was embarrassed and wondered if this was right... but he was happy. That Jae-young came looking for him, and that he said he wouldn’t let go.

In his small circle of relationships, Jae-young was the only person who wholly knew only him. A person who doesn’t know much about ‘Han Seung-hyun,’ who knows and judges only the current Seung-hyun.

A person who doesn’t doubt Seung-hyun, doesn’t find him pathetic, doesn’t pity him. Having even one such person was really meaningful to Seung-hyun.

Jae-young said it. That he didn’t seem to be in his right mind. In fact, Seung-hyun was in no position to speak of others either.

He liked being together so much that he didn’t want to think rationally. To the point where he didn’t want to think deeply.

“...If it’s going to be like this, I might as well.”

If he was going to be a selfish person anyway, should he just become a completely selfish person? Seung-hyun pondered for a moment and shook his head.

There is definitely power in a name. Even if they continued the same as before. The moment you put a name to that feeling and speak it out loud, the

moment you define the relationship. The emotions would become more poignant and deeper.

That was Seung-hyun's last line, so he didn't want to hear those words. Seung-hyun, who lifted his heavy body, trembled for a moment at the chill he felt. Seung-hyun, wearing an indoor cardigan, took slow steps.

"...What are you doing?"

He thought it earlier too, but he had a comfortable air as if it were his own home, having come several times. Staring at Jae-young standing in front of the induction stove, Jae-young stepped aside and showed what he was doing.

"The less appetite you have, the more you should eat well. There's no house without rice, right?"

What was in the pot was white rice turning into porridge. He knows how to do this too. Seung-hyun looked into the pot with curious eyes.

"Doesn't it look good?"

An attitude as if nothing had happened. Seung-hyun decided to join in that attitude.

"Plain porridge tastes all the same."

"Nonsense. There's a know-how to this too."

As if nothing had happened, the two returned to normal. Jae-young sat Seung-hyun in front of the table and said,

"Wait a bit. I'll make sure you can't think like that again."

Jae-young, who had bluffed, went back to the pot. Seung-hyun blankly watched him and said,

"You must really like cooking."

"Just sometimes... rather than liking cooking itself, I prefer making it for others."

It started as a hobby, but giving it to others felt better than making it for himself to eat. Jae-young stirred the almost finished porridge once and took out a bowl.

“It’s like your house, not mine.”

“Well... it may not necessarily be a house just for myself.”

“Haha.”

Come to think of it, the house is too big to live alone. Seung-hyun suddenly thought about what it would be like to actually live with Jae-young.

“...Since you come over all the time, it’s almost like that anyway.”

It’s similar now too. Seung-hyun smiled slightly. It was almost like living together, except they just didn’t sleep together.

“Be careful, it’s hot.”

Jae-young put a bowl of porridge in front of Seung-hyun. The taste of rice porridge may be all the same, but thinking that Jae-young’s dedication went into it made him feel a bit strange.

“...Thank you.”

“What for, it’s just this.”

It wasn’t simply a thank you for the food. Jae-young also noticed the meaning behind it, but pretended not to know and shrugged.

“I’ll eat well.”

Seung-hyun took a spoonful of the steaming porridge and put it in his mouth. He thought he had no appetite, but once something entered his mouth, he did want to keep eating.

“Is it good?”

Seung-hyun nodded silently. The peaceful evening passed like that. Starting tomorrow, everyday life no different from usual would continue again.

“You had quite a few cards. You were keeping them without using them.”

“It’s better to aim for a sure time than to act hastily.”

“Is now such a time?”

Seok-hyung closed his mouth without answering Hyeokjae’s words. A sure time. Rather than that, wouldn’t it be more accurate to say it’s the only chance?

Seung-hyun’s physical condition was top secret. He talked about his health not being good, but Hyeokjae only knew Seung-hyun was in a state that required some temporary recuperation.

“...It’s a time we can’t miss.”

“Well, I don’t care either way. But won’t you get scolded by Director Han later for this?”

“I don’t think there will be no responsibility to take, but it’s okay. If I was afraid of that, I wouldn’t have started in the first place.”

Seok-hyung still had a composed face. Thinking about Seung-hyun’s condition these days, it was clear he would hate it so much he’d spit.

He had never done anything Seung-hyun disliked. Now he was convinced this was for Seung-hyun’s sake.

“It’s fine.”

“Well, if you’re that sure. I think so too actually. It doesn’t make sense for Director Han to step down this easily. It’s not just me, everyone thinks that way.”

“.....”

“There are more than a few betting on when he’ll return. If we use this... well, does that day become his return date?”

“...I can’t give you a definite answer on whether he’ll return. However, it certainly wouldn’t be what you want for Executive Director Han Tae-sung to easily take over HJ.”

Hyeokjae also nodded at Seok-hyung's words. Seok-hyung was someone who knew Han Seung-hyun better than anyone. Sometimes to the point of giving goosebumps.

"I'm only doing what's best for you. No matter the outcome, you've told me time and again how foolish it is to not even try and just give up."

Even while mentioning Gyeongae, Seok-hyung's face showed no change in expression. I should go see her soon. Thinking of the address in his pocket, Seok-hyung continued his conversation with Hyeokjae.

Episode 62

Seung-hyun and Jae-young were living their usual lives, no different from before. No, rather, it seemed like they had become even more comfortable with each other than before.

In the meantime, the season had passed the beginning of winter and the coldest time of the year was approaching.

"Ugh, the weather is very cold."

"Because it's winter. At times like this, it's best to stay still inside without going out."

Jae-young came inside shivering from the cold outside. The heating must have been turned up so high that as soon as he came in, the air felt suffocating, so he had to take off not only his outerwear but also the sweater he was wearing over his shirt.

"But this house feels like summer."

"...I hate the cold."

What a great life, not having to bundle up and hide under a heated floor to save on heating bills. Seung-hyun, wearing thin clothes, sipped the coffee he was holding awkwardly.

"It's definitely better than catching a cold. You did well."

Jae-young, who familiarly organized and hung up the clothes he had taken off, approached the sofa where Seung-hyun was sitting. His hands were a bit cold as if he had been outside for a long time.

“Did you walk here?”

“No, I just stopped by my parents’ house and said I’d do something for a bit before coming. They’re making me do something they could have someone else do.”

Jae-young bluffed and tapped his own shoulders as if massaging them. The more he saw, the more it seemed like a harmonious family.

“They probably called you that way because they wanted to see you.”

“Rather than that... it’s probably because they’re curious about something.”

The incident that occurred during Mrs. Ju’s shopping the other day had already become a rumor among the family. The story that Jae-young and Seung-hyun seemed to be closer than expected.

His brothers were pestering him side by side, asking if he suddenly became interested in management, and even when he said no, they were looking at him with eyes full of suspicion. Annoying things were piling up.

‘If you’re interested, say it outright. Don’t scheme behind my back like a coward.’

‘If you’re going to say nonsense, I’m leaving.’

He would have let that slide as it was half-jokingly, but what happened after was the problem.

‘Can’t you introduce him to us too?’

‘What are you going to do with someone who resigned?’

‘You must have gotten quite close. Still, can’t you tell us about it?’

How could there be no one who spoke differently? Jae-young, who had half-ignored them and finished the task he was asked to do, left as if running away.

“What are they so curious about?”

“It’s something trivial, so you don’t need to worry about it. Rather than that, we should do something on a day like this.”

Jae-young looked at Seung-hyun with eyes that said let's go outside. Seung-hyun looked troubled and pondered.

'It's a bit hard to refuse when you look at me like that...'

In fact, he had no desire to go outside at all. He was already sensitive to the cold, but whether it was because 'Han Seung-hyun's' body hated the cold more or because his health wasn't good, the cold felt particularly piercing.

Since there was nothing he absolutely had to go out for anyway, he had decided to spend the winter only at home. It hadn't been that long since he made that resolution.

"They say it's likely to be a white Christmas this year. I like the thought of snow piling up."

"...Isn't snow the prettiest when viewed from home?"

"You have no sense of romance, Seung-hyun."

Seung-hyun made a displeased face at Jae-young, who seemed to have some kind of fantasy about snow. To Seung-hyun, snow was literally just pretty garbage.

'Romance or whatever... When I have to leave early in the morning and the traffic is jammed because of snow, or when I'm busy and think about clearing the snow piled up in front of the store, it's only terrible.'

Moreover, when it snows, you can't see well in front, and the floor becomes a mess every time a customer comes in. Seung-hyun frowned as he thought realistically.

"I don't really like snow."

At Seung-hyun's words, Jae-young looked a little sullen. He's not even a child. What's so great about snow? If it were someone else, Seung-hyun would have said something like, 'You don't know anything,' but he couldn't do that to Jae-young.

"What's so bad about snow? You can feel the passage of time. Isn't it atmospheric?"

Is this the difference between someone who grew up well-off? Come to think of it, where would Jae-young have cleared snow? Even if the car was stuck because of snow, he probably never felt uncomfortable because he had no urgent business.

“...So what do you want to do?”

Well, now there's no need to clear snow, so it might not be like that. Seung-hyun reluctantly asked. Jae-young lifted his head as if he had never looked sullen and said,

“In winter, it's skiing, of course.”

“...I don't know how to ski.”

“No one is good at it from the beginning. Everyone learns and grows while doing it.”

“I hate crowded places.”

“Why would it be crowded?”

Jae-young said with a genuinely puzzled look on his face. It seemed he was thinking of a different level of place than what Seung-hyun had in mind.

“The place I originally thought of isn't crowded either, but... if you don't like running into other people, there are places you can rent privately too.”

“...Where are you trying to go?”

“Europe would be nice. Or North America is good too.”

It was a much larger scale than he had thought. Seung-hyun shook his head.

“I have no plans to go abroad for the time being.”

“Why?”

“I don't want to be on a plane for a long time.”

In fact, he had never been on a plane before. Even if his body had a hard time enduring long-distance flights, he did want to try a short-distance flight.

However, the places Jae-young wanted to go all required flights of over ten hours. No matter how he thought about it, it was too much.

“You must like skiing.”

“Whether it’s skiing or snowboarding, well... I like any kind of light exercise I can do.”

It was a fitting hobby. Come to think of it, that body doesn’t seem to come about naturally.

‘That’s a bit... I might want to see that.’

He had no desire to ski himself, but he was a little curious to see Jae-young skiing or snowboarding. However, he soon became convinced it was too much.

“I’m not going. I’d rather you suggest going somewhere else. If we’re going, let’s go somewhere close.”

This was quite a compromise on his part. At Seung-hyun’s words, Jae-young became lost in thought.

“Hmm, somewhere close...”

December. In fact, no matter where they went, it would inevitably be crowded. Since Christmas was not far off, it seemed most places would probably be fully booked.

Wouldn’t it be hard to travel? So he wished he would just let him stay home quietly. Seung-hyun said, hiding his ulterior motive,

“Well, it’s not like we absolutely have to go...”

“There is one place that comes to mind when it comes to a snowy place nearby.”

Jae-young looked like he had a good idea.

“Shall we go to Sapporo?”

He didn't know much about foreign countries, but he knew it was a city famous for snow. It's not far, so that much should be fine. Seung-hyun nodded.

"Okay."

At the thoughtless answer, Jae-young's expression became a bit subtle. What, is this not it? Seung-hyun tilted his head and said,

"Or somewhere else too..."

"No. No, it's not that. It would be nice and atmospheric."

Why is he talking like it's someone else's idea when he suggested going? Not understanding Jae-young's attitude, Seung-hyun tilted his head.

"It's nothing."

"But I don't know if we can go right away. Isn't it a time when there are a lot of people? It seems it won't be easy to set a schedule."

"Why worry about that?"

Jae-young said with a look that said he didn't understand. Isn't it usually hard to get plane tickets around the end of the year because everyone is going on overseas trips or whatnot? Jae-young said to Seung-hyun, who was thinking in a very ordinary way,

"We can't use a private jet, but... it's only economy seats that have no availability."

"Ah."

Seung-hyun made a stupid face. I was worrying too realistically. If you have money, you can do anything in a capitalist society.

"Come to think of it, you've never booked anything yourself, have you, Seung-hyun?"

Fortunately, Jae-young seemed to think Seung-hyun's current attitude was because he didn't know much about the world.

'Well... to Jae-young, that would be realistic thinking.'

“You don’t have any particular schedule, right?”

“I have no one to meet and no reason to have appointments.”

“Then I’ll book the tickets. Your passport is in your room, right?”

How did he know that too? Seung-hyun nodded with a displeased look on his face. He had a thought that it was definitely his house, but somehow Jae-young seemed to know more about this house.

“Ah, the ticket cost...”

“How much could it be? Just let me pay for it.”

Jae-young sat Seung-hyun back down on the sofa and went into the room to find his passport. An overseas trip during the snowy season. In fact, it seemed tiring and he just wanted to stay home, but seeing Jae-young already excited, it seemed he was getting a little excited too.

Because it was the end of the year, Jae-young also ended up being called here and there, so the actual travel dates were set for two weeks later. It was a trip that would take place almost as soon as the new year began.

And Jae-young wasn’t the only one who ended up being called to bothersome gatherings to mark the end of the year.

A few days after deciding to go on the trip, Seung-hyun, who had been living a peaceful life, sighed at a message from an unpleasant person.

Episode 63

[This is Secretary Kang Gijeong. The Chairman has arranged a family dinner to mark the end of the year. Please come to Hanlimdang at 6:30 pm on the 23rd.] 3:45 PM

Even though he clearly told them not to give out his number, somehow the Chairman’s direct secretary contacted him, knowing it.

Come to think of it, it wouldn’t be a difficult task for Chairman Han. It was a moment when he realized once again that if you have money, you can do anything in this world.

'Why make this kind of gathering when we're not even happy to see each other's faces?'

Can't I just not go? Seung-hyun thought so and turned off his phone screen. But the situation couldn't flow that easily.

"He's doing all sorts of things."

"....."

At the end of the year, Jae-young was called here and there by his mother, President Joo Seong-ah. Thanks to that, Seung-hyun was spending a week that was boring to the point of being quiet. But that peace didn't last long.

Surprised to see a face he never thought he would see in this house, Seung-hyun couldn't answer and just stared at the person in front of him.

"It seems you didn't even intend to go out. You must have really recklessly decided to go out."

The one who came to the house he never even informed was Seung-hyun's mother. With a displeased look on her face, she lightly hit Seung-hyun and came inside.

"I don't know what you're thinking by doing this, but if you're going to do anything, don't you think you don't need your father's help? Submitting your resignation on your own, even leaving the house. What are you trying to do?"

It was a more rational appearance than the last meeting, but it was still an excessively chilly appearance to be called the face of a mother facing her only child.

"If the Chairman has arranged a seat, of course you should go. Your father said to go just in case, so I came... How could you not disappoint expectations? You didn't take after either of your parents. Where the hell did something like this come from?"

It is known that the probability of a fervid child being born between a dominant alpha and a dominant omega is less than 5 percent. But she had never once thought that her child would not be dominant.

“How did I end up with someone like you... No, never mind. It’s just a waste of breath to talk about it. Hurry up and get ready. If you start getting ready now, you’ll arrive on time.”

After spitting out only what she had to say, she glared at Seung-hyun with her arms crossed. Only then did Seung-hyun come to his senses and say,

“I have no intention of going, so if you’re going to go, go alone.”

“...Are you really crazy?”

Now she had a dumbfounded look on her face. Blinking her eyes, she spoke nervously.

“Do you think we go to that gathering because it’s comfortable for us? It’s an uncomfortable situation, but we go because we have to.”

“You’re talking as if you’re making a sacrifice. You’re going because it’s a gathering you have to go to, even if you have to put up with anything. Because there’s something you need.”

Even though he had completely moved away from the succession rights, they were still within Chairman Han’s territory. Seung-hyun knew well that they were people who had no intention of giving up the things they could gain within that territory.

“If only you were a proper guy, we wouldn’t have to watch our steps and keep our seats like this. Because you can’t do that, we even...”

“Don’t make excuses. It’s for your own sake, isn’t it?”

Seung-hyun firmly said. The original Han Seung-hyun wouldn’t have been a stupid person either, so did he live listening to all this nonsense?

“Wha, what?”

Surprised by her son’s retort, which she heard for the first time, she stuttered. Even though he was a child she didn’t like, she had never seen him talk back to her.

“Don’t talk as if it’s for my sake. I think I clearly told you last time that I have no intention of going back.”

“Who says so? It’s all because of who that we ended up like this. Still, your father and I bow our heads and attend every time the Chairman calls, supporting you to the end, but how can you come out like this?”

“Because your unfulfilled dreams can’t be achieved through Executive Director Han Tae-sung, you reluctantly place unreasonable expectations on me. But even in your eyes, would a ruined guy catch the Chairman’s eye?”

“Then you should try harder. You have to work a hundred, a thousand times harder than that despicable bastard child and catch the Chairman’s eye!”

Her unreasonable appearance was no different from a child. Seung-hyun let out a long sigh. It seemed the problem was that he left the company too meekly.

“...I’m tired of talking and talking about the same thing. Since it seems we’ll just go in circles if we talk more, please go first.”

“What have you been taking my words for until now?”

“I’ll go, so please go first. You don’t want to go uncomfortably in the same car as me, do you?”

Seung-hyun opened the door of the dressing room. If she wants him to go that badly, he’ll go. Going wasn’t a difficult thing to do.

“...You know the Chairman doesn’t like being late. Leave with plenty of time.”

Seung-hyun’s mother turned around and left without lingering. It was because she didn’t want to travel awkwardly in the same car, as he said.

Without even seeing her off, Seung-hyun took out appropriate clothes and put them on. He couldn’t even remember the last time he wore going-out clothes.

“If you can’t let go of your lingering attachment that much, it’s right to cut you off completely.”

He didn’t think he would see Chairman Han’s face twice. Seung-hyun finished preparing to leave, hoping that this meeting would really be the last meeting with his family.

“.....”

Chairman Han didn't like it when someone else arrived later than him at a gathering. So, even before 6 o'clock, most of the people were seated in their prepared seats.

Even though he didn't cherish his family that much, Chairman Han always called his family together at the end of the year, the beginning of the year, and around his birthday. Not just the few who showed their faces at frequent events, but the entire family without a single exception.

Thanks to that, the room was filled with an awkward atmosphere. Tae-sung checked on the condition of Seon-hu, who was attending the family gathering for the first time.

“Are you okay?”

“What wouldn't be okay?”

Only Seung-hyun and Tae-sung competed for the succession rights, but Chairman Han had quite a few grandchildren. Tae-sung himself had half-siblings, and Chairman Han's two omega daughters also had two children each under them.

They were daughters who couldn't make it into the succession structure due to Chairman Han's thorough consideration of constitution and even gender, and sons who were omegas or betas.

“First time seeing you since the wedding.”

“Ah, yes. Have you been well...”

“Tae-sung must be treating you well? Of course. You're well-matched.”

Tae-sung's cousin looked Seon-hu up and down and spoke with a sneering face. A combination of a fervid and a bastard alpha. It was an attitude that they were a very well-matched pair.

Because Chairman Han noticeably discriminated against his children, his grandchildren also had a strong basis for constitutional discrimination. Even if they were siblings born from the same belly, they would ignore them, so it was obvious how they would treat Tae-sung and his spouse Seon-hu.

“A very well-matched couple. Sincerely congratulations on your marriage.”

“I heard you became pregnant not long ago, congratulations to you too. Sister-in-law.”

“Ah, the rumor has already spread that far? I’m worried. Even if it’s not a dominant like me, it shouldn’t be a fervid.”

Tae-sung cut off her words, but she continued talking without stopping. Born as a dominant omega and raised the most favored among Chairman Han’s grandchildren, she always showed an arrogant attitude at gatherings like this.

“If it’s born as a beta or fervid... ugh, I don’t even want to think about it. How difficult would it be to live in the world? It would be nice if we could determine it from the womb.”

Even though Seon-hu, her own beta younger brother and beta cousin sister were sitting right next to her, she threw out disparaging remarks without hesitation. She sighed exaggeratedly.

“...I should send a gift to my nephew at least after you give birth healthily.”

“Yeah. Make sure to send it after I give birth.”

Because it would be ominous to receive it before giving birth. It was a remark with an evident intention, although she didn’t say it out loud. Tae-sung raised the corners of his mouth, thinking that she might be the granddaughter who resembled Chairman Han the most.

“You’re here.”

A little past 6 o’clock, Tae-sung’s father Han Taehyeop and his wife entered the room. With a noble face and a bright smile, she exchanged greetings with her nieces and nephews.

“Where is Seung-hyun coming from? There’s a lot I want to ask.”

“He said he would arrive on time, so he’s probably almost here.”

She answered in a gentle voice as if she hadn’t gone to Seung-hyun earlier and acted out. She was someone who thoroughly managed her image outside.

“I heard you’re pregnant. Congratulations. You must have received a lot already, but... I should give you a gift. Do you need anything?”

“Mom says things from outside can bring in unwanted energy, so she told me not to receive gifts as much as possible.”

“Oh my... I was short-sighted.”

Seung-hyun’s mother laughed, pretending to be fine. Taehyeop sat down first as if he couldn’t even hear the conversation between the two.

“...He’s late.”

Sitting in his seat, he looked at his watch with a displeased face. A time halfway between 6:00 and 6:30. There were two empty seats left.

Episode 64

“He’s here.”

“You’re here.”

At a time about 5 minutes before 6:30, the people in the room who noticed the person just entering all stood up from their seats at once.

“This is burdensome. Sit down.”

With a single gesture, Chairman Han made his family sit down. Naturally going to sit at the prepared head seat, he looked around the large room and frowned.

“There’s an empty seat.”

It was a gathering where the whole family got together, which happened only a few times a year. Although Chairman Han did not feel great affection for his family, he did not dislike the feeling of looking down on the people he had cultivated in one place.

The reason he gathered his children, whom he usually didn’t want to see, without a single absence was precisely because of that. It could be said to be a place to see the achievements of his life, so it was a day he considered quite meaningful, but for some reason, there was an empty seat today.

“Whose seat is it?”

“He, he said he left, so I got a call. Something must have happened on the way. Father. I’ll contact him right away.”

Seung-hyun’s mother said in a deliberately calm tone, flustered. Although he was a pathetic son, she thought he wouldn’t lie, so she had returned without lingering after he said he would come.

“Tsk. Really...”

Although he didn’t say much, it was enough to earn people’s ridicule. Seung-hyun’s mother lowered her flushed face and trembled her fists placed on her knees.

‘Han Seung-hyun. You, of all people...’

“What happened?”

“Let’s talk later.”

She glared at her husband, who was frowning and speaking to her from the side. After all, the people in this family were all people she disliked, without exception.

“Everyone has arrived.”

Then, the door slid open and a familiar calm voice filled the room. Chairman Han frowned deeply at the sight of him not even sitting down quietly, but standing at the door and looking down at the people sitting without coming in.

“You’re late.”

“6:29, ah. It’s exactly 30 minutes now.”

Seung-hyun said, shrugging his shoulders. As he said, if we’re being precise, he wasn’t late, but no one was unaware that Chairman Han disliked people who arrived later than him at this gathering.

‘Did he really go crazy?’

‘What the hell is he thinking...’

Seung-hyun neatly ignored the flustered people and sat in the empty seat. He liked that he didn't have to wander because there was only one seat to sit in.

"Tsk. Enough. Sit down."

Chairman Han clicked his tongue with a displeased look on his face. Seung-hyun just ignored his parents who were glaring at him from the next seat with an indifferent face.

"You clearly know the chairman hates being late, so what's with this reckless behavior?"

"I wasn't late though."

"Are you trying to play word games with me now?"

Taehyeop, who had said a word to Seung-hyun in a low voice, hardened his expression at the indifferent answer. However, he couldn't raise his voice at a place where Chairman Han was present, so there was nothing he could do but glare at Seung-hyun.

'How pathetic. It doesn't deviate from my expectations.'

Without even giving a glance to Taehyeop and his mother, Seung-hyun calmly adjusted his posture and sat down. It was quite amusing to see them rampaging when they were alone with Seung-hyun, but in front of Chairman Han, they became gentle lambs and just watched their steps.

"There are less than ten days left until the new year. I already know how you all spent this year... but since you don't have a chance to meet each other, I have to make you see each other's faces like this, don't I?"

There wasn't a single person who was comfortable in this place, but at Chairman Han's words, applause began to come from here and there. Although it was called a family gathering in a good way, it was actually a place to cater to Chairman Han's whims.

"I heard Executive Director Han is preparing something this time. Is there anything we can help with on our side?"

"Right. We're family, so we have to help each other. If you need help, tell us anytime."

People who had been strangely ignoring Tae-sung until just recently pretended to be close and talked to him. Until recently, they had been playing tug-of-war between Tae-sung and Seung-hyun, but now they thought there was no need for that and became noticeably friendly. It was a disgusting attitude for Tae-sung.

'They don't even have the heart to hide their intentions.'

"It's not often we have a gathering like this, so don't feel uncomfortable because I'm here and talk about things you couldn't usually. It's tiring to talk for a long time. Everyone, dig in."

The fact that it was no different from a scene of office politics where they size each other up and step on each other's toes, rather than a peaceful conversation, was something Chairman Han knew best.

But he had no intention of stopping it. Rather, that kind of atmosphere was what Chairman Han encouraged. As soon as Chairman Han, who was sitting at the head seat, picked up his spoon, a meal on thin ice disguised with smiling faces began.

"First time seeing you since the wedding. Your face has gotten better."

"Ah, it's because Tae-sung takes good care of me..."

"You must be a match made in heaven. Come to think of it, I thought you were well-suited from the moment I first heard. Congratulations. Really."

It was clearly a different person from a little while ago, but what they said was so similar it was laughable. Seon-hu smiled awkwardly and rolled his eyes.

Talking to someone who clearly disliked him was not something Seon-hu was used to. His relationship with Tae-sung was a story between the two of them, so it wasn't difficult to try to have a conversation and improve their relationship, but...

"About having children... Oh my. No. I asked something unnecessary. It's not something that will happen as you wish anyway."

A situation where he was surrounded by several people who were not just uninterested, but full of malice. It was certainly difficult to the point where he couldn't gauge what to say.

“It’s still the newlywed phase, and children aren’t necessarily needed, so it’s okay.”

“Oh my. You don’t have to say that. I understand everything.”

“Stop saying useless things. You.”

When Tae-sung intervened, the person who had been speaking lightly shut his mouth, but the atmosphere was still hostile to Seon-hu. The atmosphere of any place was bound to follow the personality of the person who had the upper hand.

‘You know, but they’re all people who aren’t good to associate with. No matter what they say, just smile and ignore them. I’ll try to stop them as much as possible... but they’re not people who can have a sensible conversation.’

Tae-sung had said that too, so he had come prepared to some extent, but he still felt a little dizzy. Moreover, for Seon-hu, there was one more person he was concerned about, in addition to the people who spoke harsh words with smiling faces without even trying to hide their malice.

‘It’s the first time seeing him since that day...’

Seon-hu secretly glanced at Seung-hyun and hurriedly lowered his gaze in case he was caught. The atmosphere was completely different both times when he first saw him and when they met by chance. That was the same today too.

How should he put it, a feeling that he seemed bothered and languid? Tae-sung, who noticed Seon-hu sneaking glances at Seung-hyun without realizing it, gave him a light warning.

“What’s wrong?”

“Ah, that’s...”

“Just ignore him. I don’t know what he’s thinking... but he’s someone who manages his image perfectly in front of the chairman to the point of giving goosebumps, no matter what plan he has.”

Tae-sung spoke in a small voice and dealt with the rude words of the family on behalf of Seon-hu.

“By the way, Seon-hu is lucky. It must be worth it to have gotten married with a risk.”

But they didn't let go of the prey they had bitten so easily. The conversation naturally returned to Seon-hu.

‘I need to get used to it too. It would be nice if I could change such people... but even if that's difficult, I can't leave Tae-sung alone in that gap.’

“It's because Tae-sung treats me well. At first, I was a little worried, but now...”

“No, don't say such obvious things. Be honest. Now that Seung-hyun has quit, there's no one to take over the group but Tae-sung. From Seon-hu's perspective, it's like winning the lottery, isn't it?”

“Don't say that. Do you really believe he quit?”

Another cousin scolded him. Out of ten people, one or two at most would take Seung-hyun's resignation at face value.

There are people who think he quit after feeling the limitations of being fervid, but well, most people think there's some ulterior motive.

“Well, even if he has other thoughts, would the chairman readily accept it if he says he'll come back? He probably knows that too.”

She said that and ostentatiously glanced at the seat where Seung-hyun was sitting. But the atmosphere where her gaze landed was unusual.

Taehyeop and his wife's faces were a mess. It was a face that looked like they would scream at any moment, forgetting that it was in front of Chairman Han.

The gazes of people who felt that atmosphere began to gather there one by one. Finally, when even Chairman Han's gaze turned to them, Seung-hyun's calm voice resonated in the room.

“I told you I don't care at all even if this damn company goes bankrupt. Was it a difficult thing to understand?”

For a moment, silence hung in the room. Even though there was no way Seung-hyun couldn't have noticed that atmosphere, he picked up his spoon with an indifferent face.

Episode 65

“When do you plan to return to the company?”

The spacious room was divided into several tables, and Seung-hyun’s family occupied one table all to themselves. Taehyeop asked in a voice that wouldn’t be overheard at other tables.

“Even you should have at least a minimal level of thinking. I think that’s enough time to clear your head.”

Perhaps because of the watching eyes, his hand didn’t rise and his voice didn’t get louder, but a quiet anger could be felt in his chilly voice.

“I told the Chairman that it’s not about quitting completely but needing time to cool off. Did you want to upset me on purpose?”

It was simply because he was too lazy to talk further that he had given a deadline he couldn’t return by, but to think it would reach Taehyeop’s ears this quickly. Seung-hyun slightly frowned, feeling bothered.

“Answer.”

Taehyeop’s eyebrows shot up as if he didn’t like that look. Well, he came to have this conversation anyway.

“I didn’t have such intentions.”

“Three months was it? I think this much rest is enough. Now just...”

“I’m not that interested in what father thinks. I never considered how you would think.”

“...What?”

Taehyeop put down the utensils he was holding on the table. He had a face that doubted his ears about what he had just heard.

“I came out today to conclude that story. Because you all couldn’t believe what I was saying. I thought if I declared it in front of many listeners, you might believe me at least.”

“Are you crazy?”

Seung-hyun's mother said with a shocked face. She certainly disliked her son to the point of hating him, but at least she didn't think he had no resemblance to her and her husband.

It was the tenacious obsession with power. A fervid born between a dominant and super-dominant. An existence that deserved to be mocked just for existing, one that should be ashamed of his constitution, but still he didn't try to give up.

That's how he was taught, and instinctively that's how the child was. One who knew well the value of having his existence recognized, so sometimes he could look more vile.

In that aspect, they were a family whose interests aligned, so the couple couldn't let go of the lingering attachment to achieving their unfulfilled goals through Seung-hyun.

He's lacking but at least has the tenacity, so wouldn't he be better than that dirty bastard child the Chairman reluctantly picked up? If Seung-hyun was detestable, they hated Tae-sung so much they wanted to kill him if they could, so they couldn't just hand over HJ to him meekly.

Yeah, that was the one thing they never doubted for a single moment. But...

"No. I'm completely sane. So sane that... I feel very refreshed."

"Then you say such things? How can you do that?"

Forgetting even her place, Seung-hyun's mother was glaring at him, unable to calm down as her angry voice leaked out little by little. If it wasn't a place where Chairman Han was present, she would have more than enough reason to scream and slap him across the face like that day.

"How can you..."

"You speak as if there was some great bond between us, mother."

"...What did you say?"

In fact, he didn't intend to go this far. He only thought of Seung-hyun's family relationship as reaping what you sow and never thought deeply about it.

But acknowledging that he had become 'Han Seung-hyun' and looking into his life... it was true that he felt a bit of injustice.

Since he became Han Seung-hyun, the original him must have disappeared from this world. Even if you say the body has changed, Ahn Seung-hyun is clearly dead, so he has become a person who doesn't exist anywhere.

But these people, who only needed a successor to put forward, not a son, couldn't even properly notice his change and only yelled asking if he was crazy.

This was his own way of revenge. I don't know if Han Seung-hyun would have wanted it, but now that he found out, he didn't want to just let it slide.

'I wanted to stay quiet, but they're the ones who provoked me too.'

"Isn't it funny that you speak as if you know me well, mother?"

That her son had become a different person. It's not something easily predictable, but at least if a person suddenly changes a lot, you would think something happened and try to have a conversation.

"That I'm a fervid. And that I'm your son. Do you know anything other than those two things?"

"What are you trying to do now? Are you trying to argue right and wrong at this point? Are you protesting now? How old are you?"

"You're speaking as if you would have listened if I was young."

"What are you doing? In a place where the Chairman is present."

Taehyeop calmed his wife whose voice had risen a little. But he also found this situation absurd.

"Your mother is right. I don't know what you mean by bringing up past things at this point."

They say conglomerates and politicians are no different. Unlike his mother who couldn't hide her anger, Taehyeop maintained a calm tone and an even voice. He looked so serene it was chilling.

“The important thing is that the company is going in the wrong direction now. Are you saying you want an apology at this point? If that’s what you want, I can do that much for you, so stop with the useless stubbornness and return.”

But unlike his tone, the content wasn’t very serene. After catching his breath for a moment, he spoke as if he thought the whip wasn’t the only answer.

“You may not have wanted to be born as my child, but HJ clearly means a lot to you too. Longing for a higher place is human instinct. Weren’t you the same?”

His pretense of being kind was quite disgusting. Seung-hyun wondered what he was trying to say and listened quietly without refuting.

“No one would deny that you are sincere about HJ. So you too can’t tolerate the company being handed over to Executive Director Han, can you?”

“Is Executive Director Han some kind of monster?”

“...Everything went wrong since that bastard child entered the house. I don’t understand the Chairman who brought him into the house for such a petty reason in the first place...”

“That’s not something for you to say, is it father?”

Seung-hyun smirked. For such a petty reason. He knew what he was talking about. It was about bringing in the secretly kept illegitimate son of his legitimate children because he had no dominant alpha grandson.

He may not be a bastard child, but he probably isn’t Chairman Han’s legitimate child either. Noticing the implication, Taehyeop’s face noticeably distorted.

“...I only had a proper deal with the Chairman. It’s not something to be compared with the likes of Executive Director Han.”

“Yes. Well... I’m sure that’s the case.”

Unless it’s the side of Tae-sung’s father’s legal wife, the reason he’s getting so heated is just because of a fight over the rice bowl. It was tiring how he packaged it. Seung-hyun roughly nodded.

“Since childhood, didn’t you have a sense of responsibility that HJ was your company? So in times like this, you need to get your head on straight. I didn’t raise you to be someone who runs away.”

“That’s right. You didn’t raise me properly.”

“Are you trying to play word games with me now?”

Eventually, even Taehyeop’s calm voice contained a bit of anger. Seung-hyun just nibbled at the food in front of him, whether he heard it or not.

“No, never mind. That’s not the important thing. I understand you don’t have good feelings towards me or your mother, but there are things more important than personal feelings. You know that much, don’t you?”

Soon, Taehyeop, who had calmed down, tried to persuade Seung-hyun again. I tried listening to see what he would say, but it was neither fun nor moving.

Now he really felt like he needed to end this boring conversation. Seung-hyun spoke in a calm voice.

“If it’s not important.”

“What are you...”

“There are things more important than personal feelings. But to me, HJ is not such an existence. The ones clinging to it are you, father and mother. I don’t care what happens to it.”

“You...! Do you even know what you’re saying now?”

Finally, as even Taehyeop raised his voice, people who sensed the strange atmosphere began to look at the table of the three one by one.

“I told you I don’t care at all if this damn company goes bankrupt. Was it a difficult thing to understand?”

Seung-hyun spoke in a clear voice as if to make them hear. At his words, silence lingered for a moment to the point where not even breathing could be heard. Regardless, Seung-hyun ate without even giving a glance to the eyes looking at him.

“...What did you say just now?”

The one who broke the silence was Chairman Han. Chairman Han was originally not the type to be easily surprised, but this time he couldn't maintain his composure.

"This damn company. I said I don't care if it goes bankrupt."

"What were you talking about that led to this?"

"You asked me what HJ means to me."

While Seung-hyun, who was actually answering, had an indifferent face, every time he spoke, the sound of surprised breaths being drawn in could be heard from here and there.

Seung-hyun spoke emphatically once again.

"I won't take it even if you give it to me, so don't expect me to return."

Episode 66

"Did, did he really go crazy...?"

The cousin who had been picking a fight with Seon-hu and Tae-sung just a moment ago muttered blankly. Is he dreaming? For someone like Han Seung-hyun to say such things.

At the unbelievable sight, everyone's gazes converged on Seung-hyun. Chairman Han asked again.

"That's an interesting thing to say. So you're saying you'll never return to the company again?"

"Yes."

"Have you never thought about whether that decision will become something you'll hit the ground and regret later?"

Though the tone was calm unlike him, Seung-hyun easily sensed the cold anger underlying that calm tone.

Though they weren't deeply related by blood, he thought this aspect resembled Taehyeop. Whether he gets angry or not, they're no longer people

he needs to see, so there's no need to cater to him. Seung-hyun answered indifferently.

"I don't even have time to regret."

"You probably don't have anything urgent to do. Don't you have nothing to do?"

"I have a lot. I plan to live a fruitful life."

One blood vessel could be seen standing out on Chairman Han's forehead. But this wasn't enough. If it's anger that will quickly subside, it's clear that couple won't be able to give up on Seung-hyun's return.

"It's nothing great, so why would there be a need to obsess over a company like this?"

"I don't know what you think is so great that you're so confidently babbling that my company is nothing special."

"Well... at least there are many more meaningful things than wasting time obsessing over something useless. Doesn't the Chairman also thoroughly distinguish between what's useful and useless?"

"What?"

Only then did Seung-hyun look around. Chairman Han's children, grandchildren, and granddaughters were all looking at him with surprised faces.

"Don't you thoroughly judge and discriminate who's worth it and who's not based on constitution and gender? I also came to this conclusion after considering this and that. Obsessing over this company is meaningless."

"That's because you're lacking, I don't know why you're disparaging my company."

"It's because I think a path built up like that is bound to rot somehow."

At the brazen words, sounds of shock could be heard from here and there. Seung-hyun said without paying any attention.

“We did things like succession competition, but it was already decided from the moment you brought in Executive Director Han. You did hold onto me saying I’m not bad for a fervid and you’ll see, but no matter what results I produced, it was a meaningless thing, wasn’t it?”

Han Seung-hyun was such a foolish guy. The setting was that his personality is nasty so he can’t distinguish front and back and rages but his head is somewhat smart, so why didn’t he know this simple thing? No, he probably didn’t want to acknowledge it.

“It’s right to quickly give up on things that won’t work out.”

“...Yes. Let’s say that’s the case. But when did I ever make you work without giving you proper compensation?”

“I won’t say I didn’t gain anything from being born as the Chairman’s grandson. But... I also didn’t play and eat for compensation, so let’s say the calculation is done with that.”

At the answer that didn’t back down a single word, Chairman Han was at a loss for words and closed his mouth for a moment. The cousin who was watching let out a hollow laugh and said,

“Are you really crazy? Have you decided to go wild? Drowning in a victim mentality... Anyway. All fervids are like that, but. Still, I thought you at least had a functioning head.”

“Well, seeing you talk, I don’t know if dominants are anything special either.”

“Wha, what?”

Flustered by the ridicule she heard for the first time, the cousin stammered. Born as a dominant omega, the granddaughter Chairman Han cherished the most, she had never heard such words before.

“You’re not smart, nor do you have a proper personality. Well, the soulmate talk was a bit funny but... other than going on about dominant and fervid, what else can you do?”

“What, what are you... what am I... no...”

Flustered, she couldn't even string together proper words and looked around hoping someone would help. But everyone was equally shocked, so they all just opened their mouths and stupidly stared at Seung-hyun.

“Grandfather...!”

“It's the same even now. Can't even refute properly so you go looking for the Chairman first. Well, the Chairman did raise you to be an idiot.”

“What are you trying to do now!”

The resounding voice wasn't scary at all. All she can do is yell. To Seung-hyun who had no lingering attachment to the company or family's recognition, it was as meaningless as the lion's roar of an actor in a drama he watched yesterday.

“I only came today to clearly inform you of my thoughts. At first, I had no intention of coming, but when my mother personally came to find me and even spoke to me, I thought I really need to make it clear this time. Everyone seems curious about my thoughts, so I'm directly telling you.”

Seung-hyun swept his gaze over the people and rested his eyes for a moment on Tae-sung and Seon-hu who had surprised faces. I hope that bastard will finally believe my words now.

“I have absolutely no intention of returning to the company. Rather than clinging to something meaningless, I want to live my own life.”

“.....”

“Since you all don't believe my words, I have to spread rumors like this. What can I do?”

Well, there were a few things he didn't necessarily have to say, but it seemed like he had to go this far for them to let go of their lingering attachments... and they were words he personally wanted to say too. Seung-hyun stood up from his seat with a refreshed face.

He did think it was a waste since the food was quite delicious, but if he came separately later it would be fine, so he didn't have much lingering attachment. Seung-hyun finally said to his cousin who was still flushed.

“Whether dominant or whatever... it’s nothing great. Don’t you think?”

“Wh, why are you saying that to me...”

“You seem like the perfect example. Well, if that’s your life’s greatest achievement, I guess you’d want to flaunt it to the fullest.”

“Y, you... speaking informally, and such ill-mannered words...! How can you say that to someone’s face...!”

Ah, she was older. Seung-hyun didn’t perfectly know his cousin relationships, so he made a mistake. But well, it’s not important.

“It’s funny that you’re going on about manners to me. To my face... it would have been nice if you had thought about that for the people next to you too.”

He didn’t know well, but he knew that quite a few of Chairman Han’s grandchildren were fervids and betas. Indeed, a slight sense of exhilaration rose on the faces of a few people.

Well, in fact, this was done to show Chairman Han, so it ended up being like venting anger on unrelated people. But considering her actions, he didn’t think it was too much. Even from a quite distant table, the sound of her giggling while ridiculing people could be heard.

“I’ve said everything I have to say... Have a pleasant year-end. But I’d appreciate it if you don’t look for me anymore.”

“.....”

“I’ll get going now.”

Seung-hyun left the room before Chairman Han’s answer even came out. I roughly said what I wanted to say and drove it in, so now there really won’t be any bothersome things.

“Haa.”

After standing still for a moment and facing the cold outside air, Seung-hyun headed to the parking lot. I should go home. I’m a bit hungry since I stopped eating midway.

“Wa, wait a moment.”

Then, someone grabbed Seung-hyun who was trying to leave the restaurant building. The person panting as if he had run was none other than Seon-hu.

“What is it?”

Seung-hyun’s expression hardened a little as he faced the person he least wanted to, no. The person he mustn’t get involved with.

“I, I wanted to... say thank you...”

“To me?”

Did I do something to be thanked for? The flustered Seung-hyun asked back. Seon-hu said, meeting Seung-hyun’s gaze,

“What that person sarcastically said earlier about being a match made in heaven... you talked about it for me.”

It wasn’t an action he deeply thought about. He just said it because those words that were stuck in his ears bothered him.

“I was a bit worried after we parted ways like that last time... is your body a bit better?”

“...Yes. Well.”

Indeed, that’s the protagonist Seon-hu, knowing how to be grateful and reciprocate even for such small things. Seung-hyun avoided his gaze, feeling embarrassed of himself for feeling something like jealousy towards him for a moment.

“That’s a relief.”

“Didn’t Executive Director Han tell you not to get close to me?”

“He did, but... I don’t know if Director Han, no. If Seung-hyun is a bad person. Ah, it’s not that Tae-sung called Seung-hyun that...”

“It doesn’t matter what he said. Don’t worry about it.”

Seung-hyun calmed the flustered Seon-hu. It’s not surprising at all that Tae-sung dislikes him, but Seon-hu seemed to think he would be hurt by it.

“I didn’t say it to hear a thank you, so it’s fine. Executive Director Han will be worried, so go back now.”

“That, that’s true, but there’s something I want to ask.”

Seon-hu grabbed Seung-hyun again as he tried to leave. Something to ask? What would Seon-hu be curious about regarding him? Seung-hyun stopped as if telling him to speak.

After a while, Seon-hu, who had been taking deep breaths as if making a resolution, opened his mouth.

Episode 67

“Are you and Jae-young... just friends?”

The carefully asked question had a nuance of expecting a different answer. Seung-hyun thought the question was interesting.

“What makes you want to ask me something like that? I think I know what Executive Director Han would have said even without hearing it.”

Although it was still before Seung-hyun did anything to Seon-hu, Tae-sung had been consistently suspicious of Seung-hyun from the beginning until now.

Considering their last meeting and just from what he said a moment ago, there was no way Tae-sung wouldn’t have warned Seon-hu about him. But Seon-hu didn’t show any signs of avoiding Seung-hyun at all.

Saying thank you was one thing, but having this kind of private conversation was certainly an interesting thing.

“...Honestly, I can’t say I heard good things... but still.”

If he listened to Tae-sung’s words, it would be right not to exchange a single word. But Seon-hu didn’t want to do that. It wasn’t a rebellious feeling of not wanting to hear Tae-sung’s words.

He wasn’t a child, and he didn’t think something big would happen if he didn’t listen to his words. Isn’t one’s life made up of one’s own choices?

“I want to judge from my own experience. And asking isn’t something so great. It’s not like I have to run away.”

Unlike Tae-sung's words, Seon-hu didn't feel like Seung-hyun was such a bad person. He showed signs of putting up a wall or being bothered by the other person's words, but as for being as scary as Tae-sung said. He didn't seem like that at all.

"If you're Jae-young's friend, it feels like you're my friend too. And somehow, I feel like I want to get close to you."

In fact, part of the reason he brought up Jae-young was because of the suspicious vibe he felt from Jae-young not long ago, but it was also an excuse to just try to strike up a conversation with Seung-hyun.

"Ah, was I too sudden?"

After saying everything he wanted to say, Seon-hu watched Seung-hyun's reaction. Wanting to get close. Seung-hyun tried a meaningless imagination for a moment.

Becoming friends with Seon-hu didn't seem so bad. He's optimistic to the point of being clueless, but Seung-hyun didn't dislike such people.

Above all, Seon-hu had a charm that drew people in to the point of feeling envious, perhaps because he was the protagonist.

"Well."

Becoming friends with Seon-hu and bragging about his relationship with Jae-young. Having silly conversations. As time passed like that, maybe even Tae-sung, who was displeased, would someday believe that he really had no interest in the company.

"I don't want to take unnecessary risks. I don't want to be unnecessarily suspected by Executive Director Han either."

"Ah....."

"To be honest, it's a bit burdensome. I'm also baffled that you talk as if you know me well after meeting me a few times."

At Seung-hyun's words, Seon-hu looked a bit crestfallen. But he soon lifted his head and asked again.

“But just because you’re not on good terms with Tae-sung, doesn’t mean you have to be that way with me too.”

“And it makes me uncomfortable.”

If he had more time given to him, he would ignore the suspecting Tae-sung and wait for time to resolve it. But now he couldn’t do that.

“I didn’t do it to be thanked, I just did it because I didn’t like seeing that side act up. Executive Director Han will be worried, so go inside now.”

“.....”

“As for my relationship with Jae-young... well. I don’t know either.”

He didn’t want to say that word he defined with his own mouth, at least in front of Seon-hu. Seung-hyun left an ambiguous answer and walked to the parking lot.

“So, you’re busy tomorrow and the day after too?”

— It’s no exaggeration to say that every day at the end of the year is a commemoration event. I’m tired to death.

Seung-hyun, who had returned home, was staring at the TV screen that was on while receiving Jae-young’s whining about wanting to run away home. The news was saying it would snow throughout the Christmas holiday.

— At this very moment, I envy Seung-hyun who quit the company.

“Even though you’re practically unemployed too.”

— Unemployed? Do you know how much work I do?

For the reason that he had the most likable face among her sons, Mrs. Ju often dragged Jae-young, her youngest son, to various events. The remark that a useless guy like him should at least be useful in that way was an extra.

— Catering to Mrs. Ju’s mood is no ordinary task.

“Yes, yes.”

— Seung-hyun must have been home all day today too. Haa. I'm sincerely envious.

It wasn't true that he was home all day, but there was no need to correct him. Seung-hyun didn't answer and roughly changed the topic.

“Think of it as work. Isn't it worth doing that much work for that much salary? How much of the year do you even work?”

— Well, that's true, but... I want to do something else right now.

A cheeky remark that didn't even try to hide his intentions made Seung-hyun smile. It was nice to be able to smile comfortably since he couldn't see his face on the phone.

— Tomorrow is Christmas Eve, so it's nice that everywhere you look on the streets, it feels like Christmas.

“Don't you dislike the streets being chaotic?”

— Does Seung-hyun really have no sense of romance?

Jae-young grumbled. Hates snow, hates Christmas. When asked if there was anything he liked then, Seung-hyun also pondered seriously.

Hating snow and Christmas was because he had hard memories related to them. Not only snow, but he had an experience where he literally thought he was going to die while working part-time on Christmas.

It's just one red day, but why were orders pouring in as if it was such a special day? Thinking of the day when he had to take orders and phone calls frantically and move his hands made him still dizzy.

— Even if snow is like that, when you say Christmas, there's an image that comes to mind.

“..... Santa?”

— You're doing that on purpose, right?

Seung-hyun had a bitter smile. No matter how realistically he lived, there was no way he wouldn't know. Christmas is considered a day for lovers. Some friends envied couples, but Seung-hyun wasn't particularly interested.

‘What does Christmas have to do with lovers? Those are all just business tactics.’

“Christmas Eve and Christmas will be the busiest days anyway. What’s the point of talking about it?”

— Still.....

Though they clearly didn’t define their relationship as lovers, the two were aware of each other as a special relationship, even if they didn’t say it.

Seung-hyun noticed it but just smiled without correcting it. He still had no fantasies about Christmas, but he kind of liked Jae-young’s actions.

“Is there something you want to do? I thought you were busy.”

— Still, I think I can go back early on one of the two days. I think you ate well what I made for you last time.

Why is he beating around the bush so much to say let’s at least have dinner together? Even that aspect felt cute to himself.

“Okay. I’ll wait.”

At Seung-hyun’s answer, Jae-young continued the conversation with a satisfied voice about meaningless things, then said he had to go again, leaving only a regretful feeling and hanging up the phone.

It was amazing how a single phone call could make his mood so good even though he had a day full of annoying things.

Having ruined the atmosphere to that extent and left, Seung-hyun’s parents would now give up on his return. No, at least until this incident was somewhat forgotten by Chairman Han, they would be quiet.

‘Above all, Han Seung-hyun’s lifespan will end faster.’

Seung-hyun randomly flipped through the TV channels. The remote control that was wandering aimlessly finally stopped on a channel that was playing the news again.

— Companies’ race for good deeds continues ahead of Christmas two days later. Y Hotel CEO Ju Seong-ah, who participated in a charity event held at

Seoul S Building at 5 pm today, gave a congratulatory speech hoping that Christmas and the year-end will be remembered as a joyful day even for neglected neighbors, and to the Star of Hope Foundation.....

Seung-hyun blankly stared at the screen. Although not introduced, Jae-young was standing next to CEO Ju.

He always thought he was handsome, but perhaps because he properly prepared for the event, he looked smoother than usual.

Hair up with a bit of makeup on his face. It was a face so handsome that it shone even on a regular camera without editing or lighting.

“Is that why she takes him around as a face madam.....”

Seung-hyun, who was muttering, picked up his cell phone. No matter how much it's news he watches to get information, it seemed like such a face would inevitably become famous if it was broadcast.

Thinking like that and searching Jae-young's name, sure enough, various posts filled the screen.

'Real chaebol face level that can't be beaten even by dramas', 'Y Hotel's third son's face that shows the world is unfair', etc. Clicking on posts that were clearly nonsense just from the titles, there were tons of photos of Jae-young uploaded.

'..... He's handsome indeed.'

Seung-hyun slowly scrolled down, appreciating all kinds of photos. Before he knew it, he even saved a few photos and clicked on other posts to find new photos.

Ding dong-!

Then, the sudden sound of the doorbell pulled Seung-hyun back to reality. No one was coming. Jae-young said he would come tomorrow or the day after.....

'Could it be that he lied to surprise me?'

Why is he ringing the bell when he knows the password too? Anyway, he likes to play pranks. Seung-hyun thought so but still walked towards the door with a not unpleasant face.

Episode 68

“There’s only one person who would come anyway, why don’t you just enter the passcode and come in...”

Seung-hyun, who opened the door thinking it would naturally be Jaeyoung, was surprised to face an unexpected person and froze on the spot.

“How did you get here?”

“The person who taught me how to obtain information is you, Director, so it’s strange for you to ask so suddenly.”

The person waiting for Seung-hyun at the door was not Jaeyoung but Seok-hyung. He hadn’t told anyone his changed home address.

“I’ll come in.”

The uninvited guest who came in without even being told to come in slowly looked around the house. The interior was completely different from Seung-hyun’s original house.

It didn’t match his taste from one to ten. It wasn’t just a story about the interior. The clothes he was wearing, the way Seok-hyung was looking at him now. Everything was unfamiliar to the extreme.

“What are you doing now...”

“If it were the director I know. When I entered the house without even asking for permission, you wouldn’t just watch but would slap me in the face, asking what brazen thing I was doing.”

The moment Seung-hyun tried to confront him belatedly, Seok-hyung cut off his words. Clearly, Seung-hyun was the only one listening, but he didn’t seem to be looking at him or talking to him.

“If it were the person I know.”

Though their gazes met belatedly, it was still strangely off from Seung-hyun. Seung-hyun got goosebumps at the appearance that seemed to separate the Han Seung-hyun he knew and the person in front of his eyes.

“Even though I know the situation given to you... is so harsh that it’s not strange for you not to act the same as before. To the point where I keep getting unimaginable thoughts, the you I know and the you now are different.”

Seung-hyun, who avoided Seok-hyung’s gaze without realizing it, took a step back. Seok-hyung, who took a step closer with a larger stride, looked at Seung-hyun. Thinking it would look more strange to avoid his gaze, Seung-hyun struggled to lift his head. Seok-hyung’s eyes that he faced were shaking terribly.

“It’s like...”

“.....”

“I know it’s nonsense, but it’s like you’ve become a different person...”

“...!!”

It was a shock that felt like his heart was sinking. He shouldn’t act awkwardly, but unable to hide his shaking eyes, Seung-hyun ended up lowering his head again.

“While knowing it’s nonsense... I don’t know why you’re saying such things on purpose.”

His voice didn’t tremble, but it was an unconfident voice even to his own ears. It was natural for his actions to change since the person changed, but Seung-hyun thought his change wouldn’t feel strange to Seok-hyung, if not others.

Because it’s not strange for a person who received a terminal diagnosis to go through a change in mindset. He was also trying to imitate the ‘Han Seung-hyun’ in the novel to some extent.

Moreover, since he had been avoiding Seok-hyung, he thought it would be difficult for him to notice anything strange.

“Even though I know... for the first few days, I thought it could be like that. I thought Director Han would also be in great shock, so you would need some time to organize your thoughts.”

At first, he thought it could be like that. The Seung-hyun Seok-hyung knew was a strong person, but at the same time, he was also a person with a precarious side that could break at any time.

Still, he thought he would come back. Even if he lost motivation right away, he thought that flame wouldn't go out until he used everything he had.

So he didn't stop Seung-hyun who said he would quit the company. But after that day, Seung-hyun became strange as if he had become a different person.

He was a person who thought even a vacation was a luxury. It was strange that a person who didn't even know how to play was wandering around here and there, and it was absolutely unacceptable that he wasn't doing anything for such a long period of time.

But there was something even more unacceptable than those circumstances. Something even stranger than the space that didn't suit Seung-hyun where he was standing now or Seung-hyun's current attire.

“...You have never looked at me like that, Director.”

Seung-hyun's gaze toward Seok-hyung was always bland. Although he took care of Seok-hyung more than others, to him, Seok-hyung was just a tool at best.

He never thought that was unpleasant. Rather, he was glad. The fact that he was a useful tool, that he had a use that would make him stay by his side.

But now, Seung-hyun was looking at Seok-hyung as a person. Ironically, that bothered him. To the point where he felt that the person who couldn't come to his senses after Seung-hyun received the terminal diagnosis might have been himself, Seung-hyun had a face different from the past.

‘How can I only notice this now?’

Clearly the same face, the same body. He acts as if he remembers the past and knows him well.

“Even though I know it’s nonsense... you don’t feel like you, Director.”

“...So, did you come all the way here to say such nonsense? What do you want to hear?”

“.....”

“That I’ve become a different person. I didn’t know this secretary was interested in novels. How about trying a new field on this occasion?”

Seung-hyun purposely pushed Seok-hyung away with an aggressive tone. His heart was beating like crazy. He knew Seok-hyung was the person who knew Han Seung-hyun the best. But he didn’t know he would infer even this nonsensical situation.

Fortunately, he also couldn’t rationally accept this supernatural phenomenon. Seung-hyun acted as ‘Han Seung-hyun,’ thinking about how he would have answered.

“You must be quite bored working under Jeong Hyeokjae. Should I arrange another job for you?”

“.....”

“If you want to play detective, why don’t you do it somewhere else? I’m not free enough to listen to your useless novel.”

He thought he came to understand Han Seung-hyun a bit through recent events, but there was a limit to just the typical villain portrayal in the novel.

Other than getting angry and saying and doing nasty things, how else did he act? How can he act as him in front of this man who knows Han Seung-hyun the best in this world?

“This news may not have reached your informant yet, but now even if I want to return to HJ, there’s no way. I just talked about it again in front of the Chairman today.”

“.....”

“Unless the Chairman gets dementia, there won’t be a place for me at the company again.”

“A position is meaningless to you anyway, isn’t it, Director?”

Knowing that, why is he acting like someone who can’t let go of his lingering attachment yet? Seung-hyun frowned and glared at Seok-hyung. What the hell is he thinking?

‘In the novel, Han Seung-hyun’s ending...’

Until the moment he died, he ran around on foot to interfere with Tae-sung’s work and tormented him. Even though he knew he was going to die anyway...

“...You’re plotting something with Jeong Hyeokjae.”

Seung-hyun finally realized why Seok-hyung had come to find him with Hyeokjae. It wasn’t simply to stimulate him. He was creepily a man who knew Han Seung-hyun well.

Even the Han Seung-hyun in the novel didn’t hope to be guaranteed a position. A life with a fixed end. He couldn’t turn the succession structure to himself in just a year, and even if he did, it was meaningless.

Nevertheless, Han Seung-hyun tormented Tae-sung to the end. He endlessly expressed his unresolved inferiority complex and anger towards Tae-sung.

It was no longer to move forward. It was an action solely to hinder Tae-sung. And what Seok-hyung wanted now was also that.

“I will do what you want, Director.”

“What if I tell you to quit now?”

“...I don’t know what change of heart you had, but in the end, you will also be happy, Director.”

Preparations were already finished to some extent. The reason he came to see Seung-hyun today was because he wanted to check how he was doing, but also because he didn’t think Seung-hyun would stay put forever.

But there was nothing to gain from the reunion that only left irrational questions. Seok-hyung, who thought further conversation was meaningless, turned around without lingering.

“I’ll get going now.”

Before Seung-hyun could even ask what he was plotting, Seok-hyung left, and Seung-hyun, whose legs gave out belatedly, sat down on the spot.

“How...”

How did he find out? Although he couldn't rationally acknowledge it, Seok-hyung was looking into Seung-hyun so accurately that it was scary. To the point where he had to admit that he had underestimated Seok-hyung too much.

More than the chaos Seok-hyung would bring, the gaze that stared straight at him felt more frightening. Seung-hyun couldn't get up from where he sat for a long time and blankly stared at the closed door.

Only the voice of the announcer in the TV that he couldn't turn off in time was filling the quiet house. The day before Christmas Eve ended like that, leaving only confusion.

Episode 69

As the news had been making a fuss, snow began to fall with the morning sun on Christmas Eve. However, Seung-hyun was so out of it that he ended up staying up all night without even noticing the snow falling outside the window.

He thought that whatever he left behind would be meaningless anyway. So it didn't matter what other people thought of him or what suspicions they had... but this was a shock he never expected.

He didn't know what Seok-hyung was trying to pull off, but it didn't matter. If he did something to the company, he could just ignore it. But he couldn't ignore the remarks that seemed to know his identity.

He knew Seok-hyung was the person who knew 'Han Seung-hyun' the best, but for him, who doesn't assume such nonsensical situations, to come to this conclusion. It didn't seem like a good sign.

Even he himself seemed unable to rationally acknowledge it, and even if he told others, who would believe it, but he couldn't think of it as no big deal.

A feeling that someday this incident would somehow have a big impact on him.

It was complicated enough that his life had a time limit, but now it was definite that the rest of his life wouldn't be peaceful either.

Seung-hyun let out a long sigh and finally looked out the window. The bright outside with thick snow belatedly caught his eye.

'Jae-young will like this.'

That was the first thought that came to mind. Since he seemed interested in fantasies and whatnot, he would probably be happy about the snow falling to commemorate Christmas.

Even though his mind was very complicated, the moment he saw the snow, he had such a silly thought. Seung-hyun, who had been looking out the window for a while, got up from his seat.

Although he was afraid of what would happen in the not-so-distant future, when he thought of Jae-young, he felt that way. A feeling of wanting to focus only on the present for now.

'He'll come here for a day, today or tomorrow...'

Seung-hyun couldn't stop Seok-hyung. Because he wasn't the owner who could put a leash on the neck of that mad dog 'Han Seung-hyun' and control him.

There was no one left in this world who could control him. The unleashed dog was sure to engulf his peace like a natural disaster.

Then, even if only for the remaining time, only for the time he could pretend not to know. Wouldn't it be better to think only of good things rather than trembling with anxiety?

Thinking like that, he wanted to see Jae-young a little more. Seung-hyun found the cell phone rolling around on the sofa.

It wasn't difficult to enter the chat window with Jae-young, but once he did, the problem was that he couldn't think of what to talk about.

It was just a while ago that he said how much of the year is busy and that he has to earn his keep. If it were someone else, it would be fine to just go out brazenly, but this always bothered him.

Only with Jae-young, not others.

“...Haa.”

In the end, Seung-hyun put down his cell phone without sending any messages. If he fell asleep, wouldn't the waiting time be a little shorter? With that thought, he decided to try to get some very late sleep.

‘Come to think of it, it's been a really long time since I've been this leisurely on a snowy day. I've never had a time like this except when I was very young.’

Seung-hyun turned his eyes back to the outside where snow had already begun to pile up little by little. Usually, when it seemed like snow would pile up, the first feeling was the bleak thought of when will all this be cleared. Now, there's no need to clear it, but today, he kept thinking of Jae-young's face saying isn't it nice when it snows?

‘...Maybe snow falling isn't such a bad thing...’

Seung-hyun threw himself on the bed thinking like that. Would Jae-young see that snow and think happily of today? He was a bit curious.

“Good work.”

“What do you mean? I just have to show my face and that's it.”

Jae-young lightly shook hands with his mother's secretary and greeted him. It was a time when there were bound to be many events due to Christmas and the year-end.

Thanks to that, he was meeting his mother's secretary so often that he was mistaken for his own secretary. The fortunate thing was that the schedule ended here today.

“There's an after-party tomorrow, wasn't it?”

“Yes. The CEO especially told me to pay attention to it. It's not an official event, but she said it will be of great help...”

“I guess it's a place for networking?”

“Yes. These days, she often says isn’t the youngest at the age to slowly get married?”

The secretary said without hiding it. It wasn’t something that needed to be hidden.

“She thought you had someone you were dating, but since that’s not the case, she said she thinks she needs to step up now.”

“Mother is really interested in useless things.”

“I also think it makes sense for the CEO to say that. Of course, you’ll do well on your own, but a parent’s heart doesn’t work that way.”

“Didn’t you say Secretary Hwang’s eldest daughter is getting married next month?”

“Ah, yes. You remembered. Time flew by so quickly.”

The secretary smiled awkwardly and scratched the back of his head. As Jae-young said, his daughter was about to get married.

Having worked as Seong-ah’s secretary for a long time, Seong-ah also helped quite a bit with that marriage. Because his daughter and Jae-young were of similar age, Seong-ah often talked to Jae-young about her in a tone that implied what she wanted.

“Actually, it still doesn’t feel real. She still seems like a child to me...”

“Secretary Hwang’s daughter was a beta, right? Then the person who will become your son-in-law must also be a beta.”

“Ah, no. The new family member is an alpha, and a woman. The same age as our daughter.”

A beta and an alpha, it was a rare combination. Secretary Hwang smiled awkwardly and said,

“I was also surprised at first. My wife and I, as well as most of our relatives, are all betas. So when she brought the person she was going to marry, I was surprised.”

It was a bit of a personal story, but since Jae-young had known him since childhood, he continued the story comfortably. Jae-young listened quietly.

“But... when I saw her talking tensely, with even her voice trembling, I had this thought. She must have worried a lot to say this. She must have been afraid that we would object and say hurtful things.”

“.....”

“Thinking like that, I felt bad for no reason. That my expression hardened as soon as I saw her, that I didn't give her trust...”

It wasn't recent that the third gender, alphas and omegas, took a place in the world, but there were still quite a few people with old-fashioned thoughts in the world.

In particular, the societies of betas and constitutional individuals were quite clearly divided. Even if dating was one thing, there were many who said marriage should follow the laws of nature.

“Honestly, I didn't accept it naturally from the beginning, but because that bothered me, I couldn't say anything else. After talking a bit more like that and hearing what kind of person she was... I thought it would be okay.”

“.....”

“And above all, if the child likes her, what right do we have to say this or that? They also say there are no parents who win over their children.”

Somehow, it reminded me of Seung-hyun. Both Seung-hyun and I were alphas and of the same sex.

‘Well, there's no point in worrying about it when the person who's supposed to care doesn't even think about it.’

But the two of them weren't lovers and their relationship was still just going around in circles, so it wasn't right to compare Secretary Hwang's daughter's situation with his own.

However, who knows what might happen in the future? Lost in such thoughts, Jae-young unknowingly said,

“...You’re a good father, Secretary Hwang. My parents would never understand.”

Even Seon-hu, a fervid omega, was treated like that, so two alphas together? He didn’t even want to imagine what kind of reaction they would show.

“Could it be that to Young Master Seon-hu, you still...”

“Don’t imagine something like a morning drama.”

Jae-young curtly said to Secretary Hwang, who had a perplexed face. Come to think of it, there’s no way that would happen. Secretary Hwang spoke again.

“At that time, it wasn’t simply because Young Master Seon-hu was a fervid. Although the CEO often said that Director Lee was annoying or that the young master was a waste...”

“If it wasn’t for that, why would she have broken that promise without hesitation?”

“But while always doing that, she never completely drew the line saying it was impossible. Although she bickered with Director Lee... in the end, the one who completely broke that promise was Director Lee.”

Indeed, the one who finally decided on Seon-hu’s marriage was Seon-hu’s father, Director Lee. But even considering that, it was Seong-ah who kept showing dissatisfaction throughout.

“She didn’t push that promise because Young Master Seon-hu was a fervid, but if you two had said you were on good terms, she would have pretended to give in.”

“.....”

“Since you two were never in a dating relationship. If you had been, who knows what would have happened.”

He had liked Seon-hu all along. But Seon-hu had never even imagined that his friend had such feelings for him, and Jae-young had secretly feared crossing the line of friendship.

‘Was I the one who drew the line on possibilities and was anxious?’

The thing with Seon-hu was a meaningless story of the past, but if that was true, could he think a little hopefully about the future?

‘...But just in case, I should keep the name transfer as it is...’

Jae-young thought so and looked out the window.

Episode 70

A snowy Christmas Eve was quite romantic. Although the conversation to finish the schedule was a bit long, there was enough leeway to go to Seung-hyun.

“Are you going home?”

“No. I have a place to drop by separately.”

“I see. Then I’ll get going...”

“Ah, Secretary Hwang.”

Jae-young grabbed Secretary Hwang, who turned around after finishing his words. Secretary Hwang waited for his words as if asking what the matter was.

‘Still, since it’s Christmas, at least a cake...’

“Christmas cake is sold at this branch too, right?”

“Of course it’s sold.”

“I want to take one, is it possible?”

“The stock... I’ll check.”

Secretary Hwang took out his cell phone and sent a text message somewhere. While waiting for a reply, he asked Jae-young,

“I guess you’re going to meet some friends.”

“...Something like that.”

“Ah, could it be a lover...?”

There was a faint expectation in the asking face. Jae-young shook his head bitterly.

“...No. It’s not that kind of relationship.”

“I won’t tell the CEO.”

“It’s really not. Just... someone I’ve been close with recently.”

It felt bitter for no reason even though he said it himself. It would be nice if he could introduce with a different name. Would that be possible?

“I see. Ah, there are some that will go out for sale tomorrow. If you go down and choose, they will package it right away.”

“Thank you. Then take care on your way back.”

“Yes. I hope you have a merry Christmas Eve too, Young Master.”

Secretary Hwang smiled kindly and bowed his head. Jae-young went down to the 1st floor, picked a cake of a suitable size, and headed to Seung-hyun’s house.

[I’ll arrive in 30 minutes] 6:49 PM

After sending a message, Jae-young, who took the wheel, drove the car along the familiar road. The road was a bit jammed due to the heavy snowfall, but it wasn’t to the point of being frustrating.

A white Christmas Eve. It seemed like it would be a memorable day. Especially since he would spend it with Seung-hyun.

‘I hope he likes the cake.’

He picked the one that looked the most ordinary, surely he wouldn’t dislike it. Jae-young parked the car and entered the house.

“...?”

The lights were off. It was too early to sleep, did he go somewhere?

Jae-young took out his cell phone and opened the message window. The message window where the read receipt hadn’t disappeared yet was visible.

'The shoes are here. No, of course he could have gone out wearing something else, but...'

"What are you doing?"

"...!!!"

Surprised by the voice suddenly heard from behind, Jae-young almost fell over. Seung-hyun in pajamas looked at him for a moment and smirked.

He woke up at the sound of the car coming in. He had just read the message on the notification bar and washed his face before coming out because he thought his just-woken-up face looked terrible.

He didn't intend to surprise him, but it was an amusing sight.

"You were surprised, weren't you? What were you doing without even turning on the lights?"

"I just woke up a moment ago."

"Now?"

At dinner time? Jae-young, who had already turned on the lights, made a suspicious face. Did he think he was joking?

"I'm unemployed, so it can happen. I took a short nap."

Seung-hyun, who had a strangely pleasant look on his face, said he would go change clothes and went into the dressing room. In the meantime, Jae-young put the things he brought on the dining table.

"What's this?"

"I said I'll make dinner, didn't I?"

"I remember that... This."

Seung-hyun pointed to the cake box and said. It was obviously a cake box at a glance. Could it be that he doesn't like it? Jae-young said with a bit of concern,

“It’s Christmas. Cakes are... hotels usually sell Christmas cakes. I saw it, so...”

It wasn’t that he brought it because he saw it, but he even asked for it to be brought, but Jae-young watched Seung-hyun’s reaction.

“Ah, right. Because it’s Christmas.”

“Do you perhaps not like it much?”

“No. It’s just... it’s my first time getting something like this.”

Since he never placed meaning on Christmas, there was no way he would have gotten a Christmas cake. Regardless of white Christmas Eve or whatever, he was just thinking about meeting.

Seeing this made him feel a bit that today was a special day.

“I like it.”

It must be about liking the cake, but for some reason, Jae-young’s heart fluttered at those words and he smiled, finding himself ridiculous.

“If you were sleeping, you obviously didn’t eat dinner.”

“Yes. Well...”

“Wait. I’ll make it delicious for you.”

Jae-young sat Seung-hyun, who was in home wear, on the sofa and happily entered the familiar kitchen. After a meal that was no different from usual, but with a slightly special feeling, cake came out for dessert.

It was a cake shape that made you think, ah, it’s Christmas at a glance. Seung-hyun, who used to think desserts were a luxury so he couldn’t eat them, and these days he didn’t eat them because it was burdensome to eat alone and he was too lazy to go out. It was the first cake he had eaten in a long time.

“It’s sparkling. Almost too pretty to eat.”

“It came out well. It’s a line that sells well every year. Hotel cakes sell quite well on Christmas. Especially this year...”

“When you say it like that, you really do seem like a Y Hotel person.”

Seung-hyun, who remembered the second day they met, when he brazenly poked his face into the room saying he was a hotel employee, smirked. At that time, he really thought he was crazy.

“It’s a place I will inherit someday, so I’m at least checking the minimum information.”

“I thought you were just unemployed.”

“...You’re underestimating me too much.”

“But you were only busy recently, you didn’t live busily even in your own opinion, did you? Always thinking about going out to play.”

“I check from time to time. And that’s not because I just want to play, it’s with Seung-hyun...”

It’s because I want to spend time with you. Jae-young, who was about to say that, swallowed his words. He didn’t want to make things awkward when the mood was good.

Instead, he handed Seung-hyun, who couldn’t drink alcohol, the non-alcoholic beverage he had brought.

“But there’s really not much time left now. Since the trip is right after the new year.”

“What do you mean not much time left? I have to do this for another week.”

Jae-young said, resting his chin as if tired. Seung-hyun looked at his face for a moment.

“You’ve been getting managed diligently these days.”

“Because I’m a face madam. My mother is someone who says until her mouth is dry that you have to appeal your strengths.”

Moreover, Seong-ah knew well that Jae-young’s appearance made a favorable impression of Y Hotel and even his family’s image in some parts of the Internet.

'I have to at least earn my keep like this even though I don't do anything.'

Thanks to that, in order to create a neat look as if managed but not, he was being dragged to the shop every morning with his mother. To him, there seemed to be little difference between usual and now.

"Are you wearing makeup?"

"It's too simple to be called makeup. Just briefly..."

He was definitely thinking that, but seeing Seung-hyun intently looking at his face, he felt like retracting that thought a bit.

At a glance, it was a face that liked how he looked now. He seemed to like his face usually too, but especially so now.

'...Should I get managed from time to time...?'

"Seeing your hair up after a long time feels unfamiliar too."

"Which do you prefer?"

At the light question, Seung-hyun fell into serious contemplation. Both down and up had their own charms. If he had to choose...

"...Down... no, up is..."

"Why?"

"Doesn't a look you see occasionally leave more of an impression than a look you see often?"

"Hmm. That makes sense too."

Jae-young laughed and lightly touched his hair. He thought about wearing it up all the time, but hearing that it's good to see it occasionally made him change his mind again.

'I should save it.'

"How's the cake?"

“I thought this kind of cake would only look fancy, but it tastes good too. It’s moderately sweet, so my hand keeps reaching for it.”

“Of course, right? Our pastry department does a good job. We ranked 1st in hotel cake preference last Christmas season.”

Although it was certain that he would inherit Y Hotel, he wasn’t particularly fond of it even while occasionally looking at the data. But thinking it was something to boast about in front of Seung-hyun, he felt a bit of attachment to it.

It was nice to bring the Christmas cake that was hard to get on the same day without difficulty, and thanks to that, to see Seung-hyun’s relaxed face.

“...I’ve never thought snowy days were good... but today, it seems a bit okay.”

Seung-hyun muttered while chewing the cake and looked out the window. It was snowing again, which had briefly stopped during the day. A Christmas Eve spent eating cake with Jae-young on a snowy day.

“Is that so? I originally liked snow... but today, I like it even more.”

Jae-young’s eyes met Seung-hyun’s and he smiled brightly. He had a strange feeling as if he could hear the sound of carols that couldn’t possibly be heard.

It was a Christmas Eve that would remain in his memory for a long time, the first meaningful one in his life.