

Real Man 16

Chapter 16

The day had come when Yoo-hyun was supposed to meet his senior from the army, Park Young-hoon.

Yoo-hyun stopped by the mart first.

He placed a can of coffee on the counter as he entered the mart.

The owner, who now recognized Yoo-hyun, smiled at him.

“Auntie, did you buy new clothes? The purple color suits your complexion well.”

“Thank you for noticing. My son bought it for me. Oh, wait. I almost forgot. Here, take this.”

“It’s okay, auntie. You don’t have to.”

“Just take it. It’s a promotional product anyway. Okay? I really want to give it to you.”

Yoo-hyun didn’t need the kitchen towel, but he appreciated the gesture.

He felt good that someone cared for him like this.

He said goodbye and left the mart.

The owner muttered to herself as she watched his back.

“He’s so pretty. How can he be so kind and polite?”

Yoo-hyun left the mart with a pleasant feeling.

Click.

The cold can of coffee refreshed his mind as well.

He hummed a tune unconsciously.

He put the kitchen towel in his bag and took a bus to the meeting place.

He had dinner with Park Young-hoon and then went to a pub.

“Where else can you find someone who travels so far to buy you food and drinks?”

“Hey, don’t say that. I’m doing this to avoid hearing your complaints.”

“Wow, kid. You’ve become so witty since I last saw you. Anyway, you have to invest a certain portion of your income in a fund when you get a job. It’s all for your own good.”

Park Young-hoon worked at a well-known financial company in South Korea.

He was still relatively new and didn’t have any big projects under his name.

But he gave Yoo-hyun some advice based on what he learned and observed.

It wasn’t very helpful for Yoo-hyun, who had experienced many ups and downs in society.

But he didn’t mind his sincere attempt to help him.

'Investment is necessary, that's true.'

Yoo-hyun didn't prioritize money, but he thought it was wise to invest some of his earnings for future contingencies.

"Okay. Cheers."

"Yeah. One shot."

Park Young-hoon boasted with confidence.

Yoo-hyun shared many stories with him.

The time they installed communication equipment on a mountain, the guerrilla training and the terrifying cold weather training.

The memory of digging trenches for a month, and the time they secretly worked out to build their muscles.

He felt excited as he recalled his army days.

It was amazing that he still remembered them after 20 years.

"To be honest, I was very worried about you."

"Worried? Why?"

"Really. You remember when you were a private? You came back from your vacation looking pale and sickly. I thought you were going to die or something. We were on guard duty together and you looked so miserable."

“What? Did you think I was going to jump off or something?”

“No. I thought I was going to shoot you. Haha.”

He made a lame joke that reminded him of a painful past.

It was when he was on duty in a remote mountain area.

He couldn't sleep at night because of the red stickers on the houses, the mother with smudged mascara, and the father who was harassed by debt collectors.

It was torture to live in such a limited environment with so much worry.

His anxious thoughts built walls around him, and he felt frustrated hundreds of times a day in front of those walls.

The only thing that lit up his life then was 'success'.

He thought that success was the only way out of his hellish life.

That's why he studied English all night in the army, and aimed for a job at a big company.

He sorted out his thoughts as he talked.

'It's all just an excuse.'

He could blame it on the special circumstances of the army, but maybe that was also an excuse he made up.

If he had trusted his family more, if he had talked to them more, or even called them more often, he wouldn't have suffered so much alone.

Park Young-hoon tried to change the mood as he saw Yoo-hyun's serious expression.

"Do you remember that time? We watched Hyodor vs Crocop fight and trained hard at the gym."

"Did we?"

Of course he didn't remember clearly.

He only had a vague memory of working out with Park Young-hoon at the gym.

"Haha, did you forget already? That was the most fun I had. You got knocked down so we couldn't do more."

"So what? You could have done it with someone else."

"Hey, you were the only one who could dodge my punches. Haha."

"Ah."

He roughly understood what he meant.

He had good eyesight back then, so he could easily avoid his punches.

"Why don't you come to our gym sometime? You still have some time before you start working, right?"

"Where is it?"

“It’s not far from where you live. Wait a minute.”

Park Young-hoon suddenly took out a pamphlet from his bag next to him and handed it over.

On the cover, a muscular man was wearing gloves, and below it was written ‘Mixed Martial Arts Specialist’.

The gym seemed to have a impressive record, as there were quite a few people who had debuted as pros from there.

“It’s not dangerous at all. Really.”

“Hmm.”

It couldn’t be not dangerous.

He had never been interested in hitting and getting hit.

He had never learned boxing, let alone mixed martial arts.

He was too busy with his work, but his basic personality was not fond of rough sports.

He did want to learn some exercise, though.

“Just stop by and take a look. I’ll talk to them nicely.”

“.....”

Yoo-hyun didn't answer, so Park Young-hoon continued to dangle the carrot.

He didn't know why he was doing this so much.

He was curious.

He wanted to live a different life, so doing something new seemed meaningful.

Yoo-hyun nodded lightly as an answer.

They say you can't pull out an ox horn in one go, so Yoo-hyun went to the gym that Park Young-hoon mentioned the next day.

He had to take a bus, but it was only 20 minutes away.

Of course, he didn't know if he would really go there.

As soon as he got off the bus, he got a text from Park Young-hoon.

-Sorry. I'm running late because of work. I told the manager, so just go in and wait.

Going in and waiting was not a problem.

"They said they would test me?"

What kind of test would they do at the gym?

Yoo-hyun wanted to check how far his physical abilities were.

Something had changed, but he didn't know?

That wasn't a good thing.

Maybe he could find out this time.

"They won't make me hit and get hit on the first day, right?"

He didn't believe that they would test someone who didn't even go to the gym like that.

He could tell by looking at the big exterior.

The building was relatively new and had a sleek signboard.

It looked fitting for the name 'Number One'.

As Yoo-hyun opened the door of the gym, he heard the sound of sandbags being hit and saw people skipping ropes.

On the ring, a man with gloves was swinging his fists.

The scene he had expected was unfolding before his eyes when a young man near the entrance asked him.

"How did you come here?"

"I was introduced by Park Young-hoon."

"Oh, manager, there's a guest here. He's introduced by Young-hoon."

He didn't know why he shouted so loudly, but thanks to that, Yoo-hyun got attention.

In the eyes of people, a short and sturdy-looking manager came up to Yoo-hyun.

He looked over Yoo-hyun's body, and his expression didn't look very pleasant.

"You're too skinny."

He shook his head as he said that.

If he thought he was just someone who wanted to register at the gym, he wouldn't have muttered to himself like that.

Something felt off about his expectations.

'What did Park Young-hoon say?'

The manager's face turned into disappointment as he looked at Yoo-hyun.

He could tell that he didn't want to lose his strength for nothing.

It was clear that Park Young-hoon had exaggerated and requested a test.

Did he say something like he had skills or a good physique?

He didn't know why he did that, but judging by his personality, he could do that.

Yoo-hyun was about to open his mouth to clear up the misunderstanding when the manager spoke first.

“Young-hoon asked me to test you, but honestly, I don’t usually show it directly to beginners. You could get hurt. Right, Oh Jung-wook?”

“Hehe. Of course, manager. My fist is not ordinary.”

The man on the ring answered, and the man facing him chuckled softly.

“You’re a newbie too. What are you talking about?”

“Hey, Kim Tae-soo..... hyung.”

He barely added hyung at the end of his voice.

The manager ignored him and continued his words.

“So I think it would be better to just teach you the basic training methods. How about it?”

His words were nice, but the atmosphere was dismissive.

Yoo-hyun felt his pride rising up slowly.

“What kind of test is it?”

“It’s like this. Jung-wook, Tae-soo.”

As soon as the manager’s words fell, the men on the ring moved.

Oh Jung-wook took a stance and swung his fist, and Kim Tae-soo dodged it with ease.

Oh Jung-wook saw an opening and tried to tackle, but his attack failed because of his opponent's evasion.

"Shh. Shh-shh."

He didn't know why he made noises with his mouth, but the scene on the ring was fierce.

At least from the perspective of beginners.

However,

'They don't look so bad?'

To Yoo-hyun's eyes, who saw it directly, it looked like they were matching each other and imitating.

The manager, who didn't know Yoo-hyun's thoughts, raised the corners of his mouth and said.

"How is it? A bit brutal, right? Anyway, let's do this when you get to a higher level."

He subtly lowered his voice, as if he thought Yoo-hyun was scared.

But he wasn't.

He was more curious than brutality.

He felt like he wouldn't get to see it on the ring if not now.

'I don't think I'll come here anyway.'

Yoo-hyun made a decision and opened his mouth lightly.

“That’s just dodging, right? I’ll try it.”

“Dodging a fist.....”

The manager blinked at Yoo-hyun’s words and was about to explain when Oh Jung-wook, who was on the ring, looked down at Yoo-hyun and said.

“What did you say? Do you think my fist is easy?”

“.....”

He frowned and made a face, but he didn’t look very threatening.

Rather, the man who was laughing next to him looked stronger.

Yoo-hyun didn’t avoid his gaze with a calm expression, and Oh Jung-wook gritted his teeth again.

“Damn. Manager, please raise this kid up.”

“Hey, you’re overdoing it again. Don’t tell me you think dodging is easy. Right?”

Kim Tae-soo, who was next to him, also asked.

Yoo-hyun didn’t understand why they were suddenly excited.

It seemed like the test was for the attacking side, but there was no reason to get angry just because he said something wrong.

It's usually the case that people who have no skills talk first.

In the end, Yoo-hyun's test began.

After changing his clothes with guidance, Yoo-hyun put on a headgear and gloves and climbed onto the ring.

When he got up there, the ring was smaller than he thought.

On the opposite side was Oh Jung-wook, who had been attacking before.

He glared at him with a venomous expression, as if he had made up his mind to do it properly.

As if to prove it, as soon as the manager gave the signal, Oh Jung-wook stretched out his fist straight toward Yoo-hyun's face.

'A beginner can never dodge this.'

Oh Jung-wook was confident.

He didn't move his legs or pull back his fist, but just threw a jab straight away.

Kim Tae-soo, who was aiming for pro, might be able to do it, but most amateurs couldn't dodge it at this distance.

But then.

'Huh?'

He dodged it.

And he did it by just moving his head slightly and avoiding the fist precisely.

He even looked relaxed on his face.

Oh Jung-wook was flustered and lowered his center more and threw another fist.

'Slow.'

Yoo-hyun could see Oh Jung-wook's movements clearly.