

Real Man 8

Chapter 8

He walked along the old streets that he had not seen for a long time, and soon he arrived at the market.

The long market alley was covered with a translucent ceiling.

The shop signs were also neatly changed.

He could not see the old-fashioned market that he remembered from his childhood.

“It has changed a lot.”

He had been worried when he heard that his mother ran a side dish shop in the market, but it was unfounded.

The environment was not bad as he thought.

He had never bothered to find out where his mother worked before.

No, maybe because he was always cold to her, his mother never mentioned it.

He did not even know where his mother’s shop was.

He only had memories of coming down once or twice a year, staying for a short while and going back up.

Yoo-hyun looked at the clothes of the people who were doing business as he walked along the alley.

When he reached about halfway, he saw a side dish shop on his left.

There was his mother, who wore a red hood on her head.

His mother had a very bright expression on her face as she talked to the lady next door.

Then a customer came.

“Oh, it’s delicious, trust me. There are people who have never eaten it, but there are no people who have eaten it once and never came back. Hey, I’m serious. Hoho.”

His mother spoke with a good humor, and the customer eventually picked up the side dish pack that his mother recommended.

“I bought it because you have a good impression. I’ll give it a try.”

“Hey, of course. I can’t lie even if I try. Yes. Thank you. Enjoy your meal.”

Yoo-hyun watched from a distance and smiled.

It was a different side of his mother.

He only remembered his mother as someone who always drank tea with dignity.

His mother really enjoyed her work.

How could she do that?

Yoo-hyun suddenly felt proud of his mother.

He decided to overcome his awkwardness and approach her with that feeling.

He would never have done that in the past.

He walked closer to his mother, who was putting the money she received from the customer into a small bag around her waist, and coughed lightly before speaking.

“Ahem. Can I take a look too?”

“Yes, of course, customer. Oh? Yoo-hyun, what are you doing here?”

He smiled softly at his surprised mother.

“Just I had some time left, so I stopped by.”

“Oh, is this Yeon-hee’s son?”

Then the lady from the donut shop next door came closer to his mother and asked.

“Yes, this is my handsome son. Yoo-hyun, say hello to her.”

“Hello, I’m Han Yoo-hyun.”

“Oh my goodness. How can you be so handsome? Your legs are long and your skin is white. You look like a celebrity.”

“Thank you. You are very beautiful too.”

Yoo-hyun replied with a polite smile, and she became more friendly.

The lady slapped his mother's shoulder and made a fuss.

"Oh my, your son speak so nicely too."

"It's true."

"Hoho."

His appearance must have been refreshing to them.

The lady kept looking him up and down as she spoke.

His mother looked happy and patted his back with a smile.

He felt good about his mother's touch.

If he knew she liked him so much, he would have visited her sooner.

He regretted it deeply.

Yoo-hyun quickly observed the surroundings and brought up a topic at the right time.

"This place..."

"Oh, you have good eyes."

Then other ladies from different shops gathered around and created a warm atmosphere.

His mother and the lady next door were naturally happy at the center of the conversation.

Yoo-hyun also felt happy seeing his mother's smiling eyes.

He realized for the first time that chatting with people was fun.

The conversation was going well when a customer came in.

It was time to leave.

"Mother, I'll go now."

"Okay, Hyun-ah. Have fun with your friends."

"I'm so sad. Yoo-hyun boy, take care."

"Yes, auntie. The donut was delicious. See you again."

He said goodbye and turned around.

When he had taken a few steps, he heard the voice of the donut lady from behind.

"Yeon Hee's son is really really fun and cool. Oh my, I'm jealous."

"Hey, don't exaggerate. Don't do that."

"I'm serious."

He did not look back, but why did he see his mother's smiling face in his head?

A deep smile formed on Yoo-hyun's lips.

He still had some time left before the appointment.

The next place he went to was his father's factory on the outskirts.

He had thought that the factory was ruined, but his father said that he had revived it with his efforts.

Judging from the fact that it was not in his memory, it must have not gone well.

When he arrived at the factory site, he saw a pile of red bricks on one side.

Suddenly, an old memory that was hidden in his head came to mind.

The red bricks made at the factory were Yoo-hyun's toys.

He used to stack them up and make a space bigger than his height.

His father did not scold him for that.

Rather, he wore a work suit and helped him.

The uncles who worked with him also played with Yoo-hyun.

It was a good memory.

When he was young, Yoo-hyun was very proud of his father.

It was his dream to become like his father.

As he was looking at the factory from afar, his father appeared.

Next to him was a young man who pulled his father's arm.

"Boss, we don't have time. Let's go quickly."

"I know! You rascal. Don't worry, nothing works out when you're impatient."

"Hey, but it's an important contract, right?"

"Yeah, yeah. Let's go."

His father followed the young man and got into the passenger seat of a blue truck.

After the house collapsed, his father was always a loser in his memory.

He was conscious of his son, and he always bowed his head at home.

He had no conversation with him after a few conflicts.

And after his mother passed away, he never contacted him at all.

He did not see any of that in his father now.

His father had changed his luxury car to a blue truck, but his generous smile was the same as before.

Yoo-hyun looked up at the sky for a moment.

Maybe he was the one who made his father so weak.

If he had listened to and trusted his father more, would things have been different?

He bit his lip at the sudden thought.

Vroom.

The car moved away from where Yoo-hyun was, in the opposite direction.

He wanted to say hello to his father, but he had to postpone the opportunity to next time.

Even so, there was no sign of disappointment on his face.

“There will be another chance.”

Yoo-hyun turned around with a relaxed mind.

On his way to the pub where he had made an appointment, he saw his elementary school.

A four-story building made of red bricks from his father’s factory and a round playground in front of it.

It was exactly as he remembered it.

He had been in the same class as his friends until high school since sixth grade.

Kim Hyun Soo, Kang Jun Ki, Ha Jun Seok.

Especially these three people, he thought they would be together until they died.

‘But I was the one who cut off contact first.’

He did not do it on purpose.

He was busy studying for a job, and after he got into a company, he was busy with work.

He missed many gatherings with various excuses, and as it repeated, he naturally drifted apart from them.

It was not easy to meet again as they lived different lives.

Especially when he could not go to Kim Hyun Soo’s mother’s funeral and Kang Jun Ki’s wedding, he remembered them well.

He made excuses about business trips and overtime work, but now that he thought about it, he could have gone there.

In the end, the reason why he did not go was not because of work, but because of his own greed.

While he was thinking about this and that, he arrived at the pub.

Thanks to the fact that he had visited quite often after graduating from high school, he remembered the signboard well.

Creak.

As he opened the door and entered, he saw the crowded interior of the pub.

'Where are they? They said they came first...'

Then someone called out to Yoo-hyun who was looking around.

"Hey, Han Yoo-hyun. What are you doing?"

"Huh? Oh. I was just distracted for a moment."

"I thought you forgot our faces because you haven't seen us for so long."

"How could I?"

Yoo-hyun gave a hollow laugh and sat down at the table.

There were three people sitting at the table.

But their faces did not match the images that came to mind.

'Was Hyun Soo always that skinny?'

The Kim Hyun Soo he remembered was very different from now.

Kang Jun Ki and Ha Jun Seok were the same.

They had changed a lot from their future faces.

If he had not seen the pictures of his childhood friends at home, he would have greeted them excitedly.

They were really young.

He felt like he had gone back to 20 years ago.

It was different from when he asked how they were doing over the phone.

Could they really blend in?

He even had such a thought.

“What are you thinking about so hard? Don’t tell me you’re skipping out again to study.”

“Of course not. Pour me a drink.”

He filled Yoo-hyunn’s glass with beer.

“Cheers, to our glorious reunion!”

Clang.

They drank without any toast or lead. They just emptied their glasses as soon as they were filled.

The old songs that he hadn’t heard in a long time, the young faces of his friends that he hadn’t seen in a long time, they made Yoo-hyunn’s heart flutter.

He quickly forgot about the awkwardness that he had expected.

He also realized that it was a delusion that their mental ages didn’t match.

When they decided to drink, they started to reminisce about the old days.

Yoo-hyunn clapped his hands and laughed at his friends' stories.

"Really, amazing. I remember that too. When Junsuk spat out tteokbokki from his nose, how many years ago was that? Ha."

"It was only two years ago."

"Huh? Really? It feels like it's been 20 years. Come on, let's drink to our glorious reunion."

He felt a twinge in his chest.

Ugh.

He gasped at the carbonated drink that cleared his nose.

He had only drunk expensive liquor, but this beer tasted so good.

He must have been waiting for a long time to drink like this without any worries.

Suddenly, he remembered his lonely past, or rather, his future, when he drank alone.

He actually had many opportunities to drink like this at work.

But Yoo-hyunn, who was running for success, thought that unnecessary drinking was a meaningless thing.

He chose work over spending time with people and making small talk.

He just kept climbing and climbing without knowing how fleeting the view from the lonely summit was.

He gulped down his drink to shake off the stuffy thoughts.

Alcohol definitely had the power to make him relax.

“Wow, why is this so good?”

“Hehe, Yoo-hyunn, why are you so happy? Did you get a job?”

“No. I’m looking for one.”

Maybe it was because they were at the age when they were preparing to enter society.

The topic of conversation soon shifted to employment.

“Hyuna, where are you going?”

“He’s good at studying, so he’ll do well. He’ll probably go to Ilseong or Hanseong.”

His friends seemed to admire him for studying abroad for a long time.

They were mistaken about something.

“Hey, you can go to a foreign company, right?”

“I don’t know.”

If it was the old Yoo-hyunn, it would have been hard, but now it was different.

It wasn't just foreign companies.

With his current skills, he could get into any company even if he had a penalty for his academic background.

His English was solid too, so he could even apply to global companies like Google or Microsoft.

No, he could even start his own company.

He had experience and he knew what industries would be promising in the future.

He also knew some policy changes, so he could start a venture company and grow it well.

If he didn't want to work, he didn't have to.

It would take some time because he didn't have any seed money, but he could also make money through investing.

But still.

Yoo-hyunn had already made up his mind in his heart.

Hanseong.

The biggest reason was to correct his mistakes.

But it wasn't just because of that.

'It was fun.'

Looking back, it was really fun.

He liked seeing himself grow every day.

He also liked seeing his work being recognized by the world through Hanseong, a big company.

The pleasure of beating his competitors and being one step ahead was like a drug that made him move without rest.

But he knew better than anyone that the end was not good.