

Super Genius DNA #Chapter 21: The Ambitious One (2) - Read Super Genius DNA Chapter 21: The Ambitious One (2)

Chapter 21: The Ambitious One (2)

“You want me to leave?” Young-Joon asked again.

“Yes. There’s no reason for a talented person like you to rot here.”

Cheon Ji-Myung grinned. Bae Sun-Mi and Park Dong-Hyun also nodded slightly.

Park Dong-Hyun added, “Actually, I also thought about the same thing. Doctor Ryu, to be honest, our team will get berated again after you leave, but we’re okay since we’re used to it. We don’t want to weigh you down.”

“I agree. I only saw you for the first time today, but I really don’t think you should stay here if you were really the one who made the iPSCs,” Bae Sun-Mi added.

Young-Joon did not say anything and just fiddled with his glass.

“What’s your dream, Doctor Ryu?” Cheon Ji-Myung asked.

“My dream?”

“Is it a little weird to ask this?”

“No, not at all. My dream... Is to save more people by curing more diseases.”

Cheon Ji-Myung chuckled. “What an innocent dream.”

“Like a true scientist,” Koh Soon-Yeol said as he drank his Sprite.

“But we’ve forgotten all about that passion,” Cheon Ji-Myung said.

“Our only dreams, like me or Lead Bae Sun-Mi here, is just to make sure our kids grow up nicely and make sure they get married.”

“To be honest, Doctor Ryu, I think you’re too good to stay at A-Gen, let alone our team,” Park Dong-Hyun added.

“But where else could I go?” Young-Joon asked.

“Hm.”

“All the smaller pharmaceutical companies are under A-Gen’s umbrella. Realistically, they lack the infrastructure. I can’t set all that up and grow the company. Look at the iPSCs made. At A-Gen, I can get genes or viruses in a day if I request to buy it, right? It would have taken one or two weeks if I did it at a smaller company because they wouldn’t have a good enough supply chain.”

“That is true.”

“And I have to now work on growing organs or differentiating it into different tissues, but there aren’t any companies other than A-Gen that have those kinds of facilities or research support.”

There was a moment of depressed silence among the team.

“I guess there aren’t any substitutes for A-Gen realistically,” Cheon Ji-Myung said.

Young-Joon would just buy a couple pieces of experimental equipment if he needed them. However, research infrastructure didn’t just mean equipment, but also human resources. Something like that was difficult to solve with money alone.

The only reason the Life Creation Department had people like Park Dong-Hyun, Jung Hae-Rim, or Koh Soon-Yeol was that it was a top-level pharmaceutical company like A-Gen. It was difficult to find scientists who could differentiate induced pluripotent stem cells into muscle cells, produce methylation data, or complete exome sequencing in just a few days. Reaction Chemistry and Cell Bio were good companies, but they weren’t *this* good.

If Young-Joon didn’t have a technician, it meant that he had to do everything himself. For example, if he needed a genetically modified marmoset monkey, he would have to create, grow, and maintain it himself. All he had to do at A-Gen was call the Experiment Animal Resource Center.

The biggest problem of all was that the CEOs of those small companies could be controlled by A-Gen, like Celligener. No company would be able to function normally if the head was being controlled.

If Young-Joon was to start his own pharmaceutical company, he could stop it from being controlled by A-Gen, but he would have to take the long way around. First of all, he would have to apply to the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Health and Welfare to establish a biology lab. He had to obtain permission to use genetically modified organisms for each unit of the laboratory.

There would be five documents needed to purchase every piece of lab equipment, and if he wanted to purchase experimental animals or a cell line, he would have to write a plan starting with the supplier and manager, and a written plan of the product's transportation, experimentation, and disposal. Management and regulation was picky because leakages could be dangerous.

No matter how exceptional Rosaline was, there was nothing she could do about the examiners of the government. If Young-Joon had to set up every single one of those components, it would take five years for him to start one experiment that he wanted to do.

"The executives would keep me from leaving after all the attention I get from the stem cells. Well, that would make me feel good, but there aren't any realistic alternatives," Young-Joon replied.

"Maybe in Korea, but there are other companies just as big as A-Gen overseas," Park Dong-Hyun said.

"There is. But they're not that different from A-Gen. You know that," Young-Joon replied.

If the management at A-Gen were satans, the people in foreign pharmaceutical companies could make them retire; their evilness was on a different level. It was common for them to do human experiments on minors in underdeveloped countries who hadn't been registered in the system, or hold human lives hostage and threaten governments because they wanted to make profits one hundred times the manufacturing price.

Even if they treated scientists better, Young-Joon didn't want to work for a place like that.

"I interned at Conson & Colson, and... You're better off not going," Jung Hae-Rim replied.

“Some people say that a familiar asshole is better than a foreign asshole.”

“Or just be a professor instead of staying at a company,” Cheon Ji-Myung suggested. He then added, “With your talent and a paper on stem cells, Jungyoon University will invite you to become a professor.”

“But professors don’t have a lot of power. All they can do is just produce basic technology; they can’t make something that can be commercialized. I want to help the world.”

“But if you work here, you’ll only help the people at the top of A-Gen. Not the world.”

“I won’t do that again since they did that to me in the Anticancer Drug Research Department.”

“No matter how smart you are, you’re an employee being paid by this company. Whatever you do will become the company’s, and the executives and the shareholders own the company.”

“They will never fill their pockets because of me.”

“But isn’t the patent of the iPSCs going to be distributed among the shareholders?”

“No, it’s not.”

There was a moment of silence. Bae Sun-Mi froze with her glass in her hand.

“What are you talking about? Do you think you can do whatever you want? All the patents that are developed at the company are theirs. To be honest, it irritates me that you are filling their pockets.”

“The technology is the company’s.”

“... I’m getting really anxious all of a sudden. How did you fill out the patent application?” Cheon Ji-Myung asked.

“I wrote my name as the primary holder of the patent. The secondary is Soon-Yeol-sunbae. The next is Dong-Hyun-sunbae and Hae-Rim-sunbae. I decided this based on the importance of the data. I know it’s unfortunate, but Manager Cheon and Lead Bae, you didn’t get a share because you weren’t at the

company, nor did you do any experiments. I wrote whatever I wanted for the shareholding percentage.”

Clang!

There was an obnoxious sound as Park Dong-Hyun dropped his glass on the table.

“Oh sorry. My hands are trembling.”

“Doctor Ryu, did you really write that? You wrote the shareholding percentage yourself?” Cheon Ji-Myung asked.

“Yes.”

“Oh my...”

The way A-Gen published patents was unique. The scientist who was the primary holder developed the technology and then filed a patent application. At this stage, the primary holder was able to specify the shareholding percentage.

This rule was actually invented when A-Gen was a startup company. They created this rule on the ideology that it was a scientist-centered company, but it actually didn't mean anything as the executives evaluated it after it was filled out in the attorney's office. If they didn't really like the ratio the primary wrote, they sent it back, or they called them into the executives' office, crushed them, and then made them change it. The employees had no choice but to follow as they had no power.

When this kind of thing went on for decades, the fact that the scientist could specify the shareholding percentage became kind of a useless, dead rule.

Nowadays, most scientists didn't even fill out the shareholding ratio when they filled out the patent; they just submitted it to the Research Support Department. Then, the Research Support Department would fill out the ratio per the orders of the lab director and send it to the attorney's office. The young scientists thought that was the rule.

There was a reason why there wasn't much dissatisfaction among the scientists. First of all, most patents didn't really make much money as most of them weren't really commercialized; that's why no one cared.

And in the case of commercializable patents that made money, which rarely happened, it took several years and dozens of scientists days and nights to publish. This meant that patents that made money were destined to be large projects, so they consumed a lot of money, manpower, and time. If Young-Joon started the iPSCs without Rosaline, how much resources would A-Gen have had to pour into them?

The only time this kind of patent came out was when the company knew about the research project very well from the beginning and supported it fully. When it became like that, it became meaningless to split the share between the primary scientists; it was difficult to give everyone a share when over two hundred scientists participated.

Of course, a few of the prominent contributors received a share in the decimals, and the rest was compensated as a bonus. The rest of the share? It was either given to the company or split among the shareholders.

No one had any complaints since it was also right in terms of research ethics; they could not ignore the contributions of the company, the lab director or the Research Support Department for supporting them for one project over a few years.

However, it was different in Young-Joon's case. He could have done this because it was such an exceptional situation.

Cheon Ji-Myung broke out in cold sweat.

"You're crazy... You filled out the share ratio yourself. And you didn't put Gil Hyung-Joon, the lab director, or the CTO? And you sent it to the attorney's office?"

"Doctor Ryu, you have to include the executives' names..." Bae Sun-Mi said to Young-Joon in worry.

"What are you talking about?" Young-Joon said with a straight face. "Those people did not even know that we were doing that sort of work until I presented the results at the seminar. So why should they get a share? That's against research ethics."

There was silence at the table once more.

"H... *Honmono*..."[1] Koh Soon-Yeol suddenly mumbled. "Not just a picky person by the book, but... This person... is really *honmono*..."

"Science should be done according to the rules. It is a field that is based on objectivity, and it should be the most pure, right?" Young-Joon asked.

"I agree," Cheon Ji-Myung replied. "But I don't know if Gil Hyung-Joon or the other executives will agree with you. Nicholas could be okay with it in this case since he's a true scientist and by the book like you, Doctor Ryu."

"You skipped the Research Support Department and directly gave it to the attorney's office in charge of Lab Six, right?" Bae Sun-Mi asked.

"Yes," Young-Joon replied.

"Then, it will go to the Research Support Department as soon as the papers are finished and then to Gil Hyung-Joon. He's going to hit the roof..."

"I'll deal with it myself. You don't need to worry."

"Explain the royalty ratio in detail," Cheon Ji-Myung asked like he was worried.

"I saw that no one individual could take more than ten percent of a patent that had high potential. So, I took ten percent, and Dong-Hyun-sunbae, Hae-Rim-sunbae, and Soon-Yeol-sunbae got three percent each," Young-Joon said.

"We got three percent?" Jung Hae-Rim was shocked, as she didn't even expect to be given any shares.

"Of course. It's only right you receive a share since you contributed to the research. I would have even given Kim Hyun-Taek a share if he did the experiment," Young-Joon replied.

"Then what about the rest?" Cheon Ji-Myung asked.

"Since we used A-Gen facilities to develop it, and since they will publish the patent, I gave A-Gen and Lab Six 0.5 percent each."

"Then is that eighty percent left?"

"There is a clause in the laws related to in-house patents that at least eighty percent of the share must be given to the company. So, I put the remaining eighty percent as funding for the Life Creation Department."

“Department funding?”

“By company, they mean A-Gen as a whole or one of the six labs. I actually can’t write it by department, but I did it anyway. I didn’t want a department like Health Food using this money. I will write a separate contract to confirm that funding and get the final approval in my name.”

“ ... ”

“Young-Joon-*kun*, did you come from the future?” Koh Soon-Yeol asked.

“Ah~ I’m not. What do you even mean?”

“It feels like a sixty-year-old executive has returned in the body of a young man and is having his bloody revenge...”

“Do you really think that’s going to pass, Doctor Ryu? It’s never going to happen since it’s an invention on the job...” Jung Hae-Rim’s voice was full of worry.

“Just wait and see. I have something in mind,” Young-Joon replied with a smile.

“Doctor Ryu,” Cheon Ji-Myung called Young-Joon. “If it is your dream to make another drug and save someone as soon as possible, it would be faster for you to give those shares up to the executives and ask for their cooperation.”

“That’s true.”

“But fighting with management to get individual research funding and approval... It seems like you have ulterior motives. What is it that you want, Doctor Ryu?”

“What do I want?”

“I want to help you if it’s something I can help you with.”

“Well, I’ll just tell you. I trust our members and other people will probably just scoff and brush it off if they hear it. My dream is what I told you before,” Young-Joon said. “And I am thinking of becoming the chief executive officer of A-Gen to achieve that goal. I will also become the largest shareholder in order to stabilize management.”

“ ... ”

There was nothing but silence at the table.

“Does it seem a little outlandish? But that’s the only way I can think of. There aren’t a lot of companies that have better hardware than A-Gen, even overseas. The problem is that the operating system here has a virus. I am going to format the hard drive and install a new one.”

Park Dong-Hyun raised his hand.

“I’m not going to talk about how it’s difficult, or it’s not possible or anything like that. To be honest, the iPSCs were also sci-fi-level stuff, right? And you got it done in a week? I am on your side, Doctor Ryu.”

“You might be hired as a proxy executive officer, but it won’t be easy becoming the largest shareholder. That’s basically saying that you’re going to become the owner of the company. You know that, right?” Cheon Ji-Myung asked Young-Joon.

“Yes.”

“Even if you have that much money, it’s hard to buy that many shares. They’ll stop it to protect their executive rights.”

“Right now, sure. But a lot of things are going to change now. It wouldn’t work if A-Gen had been an ordinary company, but A-Gen is a research-based company, right? I’m going to borrow A-Gen’s research infrastructure, start an affiliate company that can study iPSCs, and build that to take over A-Gen.”
magic

“Ha. It would be good if it worked out, but... Realistically...”

Cheon Ji-Myung scoffed.

“Doctor Ryu, when iPSCs become commercialized and get used to cure all kinds of different diseases, I think your reputation and wealth will skyrocket high enough for you to try for executive rights,” Park Dong-Hyun said. “When that happens, please make me the executive manager of the Life Creation Department. I’m sucking up to you in advance.”

Cheon Ji-Myung glared at him like he was being ridiculous.

“Then what about me?”

“It’ll be in like twenty years, so you should retire and go down to the country somewhere. You know, harvest some winter spinach, watch your grandchildren sing and dance...”

“He’s insane...” Cheon Ji-Myung said.

Young-Joon chuckled.

“It won’t take twenty years. I will get it done as soon as possible.”

“Alright. I will do everything I can to help if you are going to be able to do everything you want, Doctor Ryu,” Cheon Ji-Myung promised.

“Me too,” Jung Hae-Rim added.

“I can start right now. Doctor Ryu, what should I do?” As Park Dong-Hyun joked around, Bae Sun-Mi glanced at him.

“Dong-Hyun is super upbeat today. Why is he so excited?”

“It’s just so exciting to think that Doctor Ryu will become the head of A-Gen. Doctor Ryu, please reform this corrupt company and lead it. I have a love-hate relationship with this place now.”

“Anyway, the thing we know for sure is that Gil Hyung-Joon will come to our department with a metal pipe in his hand around Monday after reading the patent documents?” Cheon Ji-Myung said.

“I’m guessing a hammer,” Park Dong-Hyun added.

“An electric chainsaw,” Jung Hae-Rim also added.

“...”

“Stop talking nonsense and let’s drink.”

Young-Joon raised his glass.

1. *Honmono* means “the real thing” in Japanese. ?

Chapter 22: The Ambitious One (3)

The Life Creation Team received an award at the seminar that finished off the year and drank into the night.

On Saturday morning, Young-Joon began his calculations. The amount of his bonus hadn't been decided yet, and even if it had, he would get it next month on his payday. However, his cash prize for the awards was given to him on the day of the seminar itself.

He had received one hundred million won from the Revolutionary Scientist Award and the Award for Exceptional Performance combined; it was 2.5 times more than his salary. He didn't get a lot of money from the Award for Exceptional Performance because he was only a Scientist, but he was given a lot for the Revolutionary Scientist Award as it was usually given to lead scientists and above.

'I should send some to my family first.'

Young-Joon wouldn't be able to fix his family's debt with this, but this would give them some room.

Ring!

Young-Joon got a call as he was about to send money to his mother after sending some to Ryu Ji-Won, his younger sister.

[Ryu Ji-Won]

—What is this? Where did you get this money?

Ryu Ji-Won asked with a high-pitched voice as soon as Young-Joon picked up the phone.

“I sent you some allowance, that's all.”

—I think you put too many zeros on it. Do I just send it back?

“No, I sent you a million won. That's correct.”

—I got ten million won.

“Oh, I sent you the wrong amount. Sorry. I’ll read you my bank account number right now.”

—Right? You would’ve starved tomorrow.

Young-Joon could hear Ryu Ji-Won snicker over the phone.

—I’ll just send all of it back. I don’t really need money right now. What would a student need money for anyway? Just give it to Mom for our debt.

“I was going to give you one million won and give the rest to Mom. Ah, you just keep one million won and transfer the rest to her.”

—Are you serious?

“Of course. It doesn’t matter whether I send it or you send it.

—No, I mean, are you okay with sending this much money?

“Yeah, I’m fine. I got a bonus from work.

—Holy...

“So have all of it. You can use all of it.” magic

—Really? You’re serious, right? It was really inconvenient not having a laptop. Can I buy one? No take-backs.

“Yes, you can.”

—Thank you so much. You’re the best. I love you.

Young-Joon hung up the phone and looked at the remaining amount.

‘Ninety million won.’

Young-Joon called Park Joo-Hyuk.

—Yeah. What’s up?

Park Joo-Hyuk picked up with an indifferent voice.

“What are you doing?

—I'm gamin... Ah! You frustrating assholes, how could you not get that! These damn Ryu Young-Joons... Agh!

“...”

—Hey, hang up if it's nothing urgent. I have to go clean up their shit. I have to go do the teamfight of the century right...

“Can you come out for a bit?”

—What? Why?

“To pay you back.”

* * *

Park Joo-Hyuk came out wearing sweats and slippers. His hair was a mess, and he had gunk in his eye. Who could possibly think he was a lawyer?

“What do you mean you're paying me back already? You borrowed it a week ago.” Park Joo-Hyuk yawned and sat down at the coffee shop table.

“I got an award from A-Gen.”

“With the drug you made before?”

“No, A-Gen doesn't know about that. And that has nothing to do with them, so they won't give me an award for that.”

“Then with what?”

“It's called induced pluripotent stem cells. You insert a few genes into a human-derived kidney cell and revert the differentiation stage to the beginning. You can make it into a similar state to embryos and use it to make...

“Okay! That's enough. Alright, I get it. So you got a prize? How much did you get?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

“One hundred million won.”

Park Joo-Hyuk's jaw dropped to the floor.

“Seriously?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

“Well, I have a lot of debt to pay back, whether it’s mine or my family’s, but I can’t pay back all of it with this anyway. I thought I should pay you back in advance because I owe you a lot, and I’ll owe you a lot in the future as well. I said that I’ll pay you back five times more, right? I’ll send it to you right now.”

“ ... ”

Park Joo-Hyuk stared at Young-Joon blankly and then said, “No. Five times more in a week is way over the legal rate of interest.”

“Are you from the Financial Supervisory Service? I want to give it to you, so what’s the problem?”

“Just pay me back five million won so I can pay back that hyung.”[1]

“You lent me some money too, right?” Young-Joon asked.

“Let’s call it an investment. And I don’t have a lot to spend on right now anyway. I want to see how the cold medicine you made turns out.”

“It’s not cold medicine. It’s a treatment for the flu.”

“Whatever that is.”

“Well, alright. It’s good for me since I have a lot to spend on. Then I’ll pay you back next time. Hey, Joo-Hyuk, can you help me out?”

“Help you out with what?!”

“I’m thinking of writing a contract related to the stem cell patent I developed at the company. Can you take a look at it?”

Young-Joon pulled out his laptop.

“What is this?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

“I wrote something like this for splitting the royalties for the patent, right?”

“Hm.”

Park Joo-Hyuk read every line in the document in detail.

“So? How is it?”

“Shut up. Let me focus.”

Young-Joon remembered Park Joo-Hyuk doing nothing every time he saw him, but it seemed like he was still a lawyer. It was quite nice to see Park Joo-Hyuk focus hard on something that was similar to his job.

“And you made this stem cell technology by yourself?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

“Yeah. I used some of the facilities in Lab Six.”

“Was there any information you got from A-Gen when you were developing this? Any papers published from other departments of A-Gen?”

“No. And this technology can’t have anything to reference off of. This advancement is on another level.”

“And you did that?”

“In two weeks.”

“I think you’re getting weirder and weirder, but alright. Okay, list me everyone who participated in developing this technology, even if it’s a little bit.”

“It’s the people listed here: Koh Soon-Yeol, Park Dong-Hyun, and Jung Hae-Rim. That’s all of them.”

“You don’t want to give the executives or the shareholders any share of the royalties, right?”

As Park Joo-Hyuk was Young-Joon’s old friend, he instantly read his mind.

“Yeah. What do you think of the contract?”

“It’s full of shit. All else aside, what is this thing about eighty percent of the royalties being used as funding for your department and you having the final approval of it? Did you write this thinking that your company’s executives would sign off on this?”

“Of course.”

“Do you think that signature is your cause of death?[2] You told me your executives are hot-tempered. They might bash your head in when they see you.”

“Don’t worry about that part. I have a way to get past that. See if there’s any risk of it becoming false later on.”

“I think it will be fine if you can get over that part.”

“Really?”

“You developed anticancer drugs before, and these are stem cells, so they’re different, right?”

“They are.”

“Then even if you used A-Gen facilities, it’s a small percentage. So you could take this to court by claiming you have the full rights over this as an off-duty employee invention. It’s not ridiculous for you to claim ten percent.”

“Alright, good.”

“And you gave eighty percent of the patent to the company, right? The problem is that you’re trying to get the final approval, but... I don’t think your company will agree to this, but if you get them to agree somehow, it will be fine.”

“Right?”

“But they can sue you if those guys change their minds. Then it gets exhausting. It’s really difficult for an individual to fight against a company.”

“That’s enough for me. I don’t want it to go to a legal dispute. And the contract just has to be legitimate.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I’ll make a deal with the superiors if they call me, whether it be the lab directors or management. Can you help me if I have to change the contract?”

“I have a pretty steep rate as an appointed attorney.”

“You didn’t even get appointed...”

* * *

Young-Joon was able to save a lot of money since Park Joo-Hyuk didn't take the money. He was going to get a huge bonus in a month, and he would be able to escape poverty when he sold the flu treatment to an alright pharmaceutical company.

Right now, Young-Joon wasn't pressed for money. However, he decided to invest the extra money on a new drug rather than spending it all. Aside from A-Gen, he was thinking of owning a large number of patents for new drugs, similar to the treatment for the flu. This was going to be his ammunition for when he was going to become the center of A-Gen's executives. He was going to grow his reputation with stem cells and follow-up research, and then show his hidden card. Until then, he had to have as many powerful patents up his sleeve.

There weren't any companies that could do a project as big as stem cells except for A-Gen, but other diseases could be done with Reaction Chemistry and Cell Bio.

The problem was his fitness. Rosaline was still at level two, and his maximum fitness was 1.8.

'But maybe?'

Young-Joon turned on Synchronization Mode and searched for the cure for liver cancer.

[You do not have enough fitness.]

[Liver cancer is too complicated to analyze at once.]

And on an early Sunday morning...

Ring!

Young-Joon woke up to the sound of an alarm.

[Currently, you are not getting enough physical activity. Rosaline requires the following in order to recover this: three hours of jogging. Reward: 0.5 Fitness.]

Young-Joon was now wide awake. Before, Rosaline leveled up when he granted her request when his fitness was full.

Young-Joon quickly put on his jacket and ran outside. There was a pretty big park about ten minutes down the road.

“Hup!”

Young-Joon took a deep breath and started running.

Pitter patter!

An appropriate amount of stimulation was going to be effective for Rosaline’s development and fitness maintenance.

As Young-Joon was running and getting out of breath a few minutes later, he saw a message pop up in front of him.

[Activating Rosaline, who has been metastasized to the lung.]

[Rosaline starts optimizing breathing.]

He had seen these messages before when he was running to the seminar hall. He wasn’t feeling out of breath anymore.

The amount of air an adult breathed in in one breath was about five hundred milliliters. Since twenty percent of that was oxygen, one hundred milliliters of oxygen was basically being breathed in. But was all of that absorbed? No. Fifteen percent of the breath breathed out was oxygen. The lungs weren’t all that efficient since they only absorbed twenty-five milliliters of oxygen even if they breathed in five hundred milliliters.

As Young-Joon was running with energy...

“Oh!”

Young-Joon almost ran into someone when they came out of nowhere.

“What are you doing!” Young-Joon shouted as he barely dodged them. He saw that it was Song Ji-Hyun. She was also surprised to see him.

“Oh, the probiotics!”

“...My name is Ryu Young-Joon.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, but please help me!”

* * *

Song Ji-Hyun had a golden retriever. It was a big dog, which could be difficult for a woman to take care of on her own, but she had taken good care of it until now. It was because she was very attentive to her dog and because Brownie, her golden retriever, was very gentle. Her dog was very calm at home if it got enough exercise and walks.

Song Ji-Hyun took her five-year-old Brownie on a walk every morning. She thought it was weird that Brownie, who usually ran in front of her, panting in happiness, was slow and weak today. Then, Brownie stopped in the middle of the walk.

“Kack!”

Then, Brownie vomited and collapsed. Surprised, Song Ji-Hyun tried to pick Brownie up and go to the nearby animal hospital, but it wasn't easy. Controlling a big dog by its leash and picking up an unconscious big dog was a totally different thing.

So, Song Ji-Hyun decided to ask for help. Not a lot of people were at the park this early in the morning, but there was one man wearing a hat who was jogging with incredible stamina. She had stopped him since he happened to be right in front of her. That was Young-Joon.

“Where is the dog sick?” Young-Joon asked after hearing the situation.

“I don't know. Brownie just suddenly collapsed... The vet is just across the street. Can you help me?”

Young-Joon took out his phone and looked at the clock.

“It's eight in the morning right now. Do you think they're open?”

“Oh.”

Song Ji-Hyun went pale.

“W-What should we do?”

She looked like she was going to cry at any moment. Young-Joon glanced at the dog.

[Synchronization Mode: Would you like to gain insight into parvovirus? Fitness consumption rate: 0.04/second.]

'Parvovirus?'

Young-Joon remembered hearing about it during his virology lecture when he was an undergraduate student. It was a virus that infected animals, especially canines.

'I'm not a vet, but maybe I'll take a look.'

[Activating Synchronization Mode!]

1. Hyung is an informal way for a man to call a man older than him. ?
2. This is a Korean wordplay with Hanja, Chinese characters used in Korea. Sa-in, or sign, is the Hanja for cause of death and the short-form of signature. Park Joo-Hyuk is joking that this contract will be Young-Joon's cause of death because it is so ridiculous. ?

Chapter 23: The First Author (1)

It was a globular substance with about twenty sides, and it had receptors on the surface that looked like small bumps. This light green virus entered this golden retriever through its mouth and caused white cell depletion, vomiting, and dehydration. And right now, Brownie was in very bad condition. If the dog wasn't treated within six hours, it would die.

The animal hospital was closed, but there was still a way. Young-Joon tracked down the structure of the chemicals that acted on the surface of the virus and the infected cells. He found five different kinds of treatment.

"Let's go to the pharmacy," Young-Joon said.

"What?" Song Ji-Hyun replied.

"You can open the pharmacy right now, right? Let's go, hurry."

Young-Joon picked up the golden retriever and started running to Song Ji-Hyun's pharmacy.

"Wait for me!"

Song Ji-Hyun quickly ran behind him, but could not catch up to Young-Joon, who was carrying a thirty-kilogram dog. Of course, it was because of Rosaline.

At last, they were in front of the pharmacy. Song Ji-Hyun was still confused even as she was opening the doors with her keys. She had come here on a whim in complete panic as Young-Joon strongly suggested that they come here.

‘But is it okay to come to the pharmacy because the vet is closed? What can we do here?’

Song Ji-Hyun’s hand trembled, causing her to miss the keyhole several times.

“Stay calm. It will be okay.” Young-Joon comforted her.

When Young-Joon entered the pharmacy, he put down the golden retriever on one side and began rummaging through the shelves. His Synchronization Mode was on, so he could see the chemical structure of commercial drugs as soon as he opened the box.

After making a little bit of a mess on the counter...

[Cleo] magic

Young-Joon found the drug he was looking for. To be more specific, he had found hydrocortisone acetate, a component of the treatment. It was a hormone that was secreted from the adrenal glands, and it was a strong anti-inflammatory drug. No one in the world knew this yet, but it also was able to stop the growth of the parvovirus.

Young-Joon squeezed the long end of the Cleo bottle. He squeezed out two bottles and fed it to the retriever.

“What are you doing? What are you giving him?” Song Ji-Hyun asked with wide eyes.

“It says Cleo on the tube.”

“That’s an ointment for cuts on people!” Song Ji-Hyun shouted in shock.

“That’s right,” Young-Joon replied.

“No! Are you insane?”

Surprised, Song Ji-Hyun pushed Young-Joon out of the way and hugged her dog.

“Brownie!”

She was shaking the dog’s face and trying to get it to vomit out the treatment.

“The dog’s name is Brownie? What a name...”

Song Ji-Hyun did not reply and took out a bottle of hydrogen peroxide from the cupboard with an angry face. She ran to the water dispenser and got some cold water. As she was about to mix in an equal amount of hydrogen peroxide into the water, Young-Joon grabbed her arm.

“You’re trying to get Brownie to vomit, right? There’s no need.”

“Let go! What did you do to...”

“Your dog is alive. Look.”

Young-Joon pointed to Brownie. The dog still couldn’t get up, but it was now conscious. It was staring at Song Ji-Hyun.

“...”

There was a look of shock on Song Ji-Hyun’s face.

Whimper... Whine...

When Song Ji-Hyun got close, Brownie made crying sounds and licked her finger.

“Still, it’s just a temporary treatment. Take her to the vet right away when it opens. It looks like it’s a parvovirus infection, which doesn’t have any kind of treatment.”

‘Well, it didn’t exist until now.’

“You’re going to have to treat the symptoms and take care of it so that the dog can beat it on its own,” Young-Joon said.

It didn't look like Young-Joon would have to administer more Cleo as Brownie was getting better, according to what he saw through Synchronization Mode. Since it was a big dog, it would be able to heal on its own by getting enough rest and eating well.

"...What on Earth did you do?" Song Ji-Hyun asked in bewilderment. "How did you know an ointment for human skin would be effective on a dog?"

'Because Rosaline told me.'

But it was normal that Song Ji-Hyun was surprised. Even drugs that were being sold could have unknown therapeutic effects or be toxic to specific patients or illnesses, but most pharmacists, doctors, and scientists did not know that. People were unexpectedly finding anticancer effects or antibiotic properties in vegetables like tomatoes, which people have eaten for thousands of years. It was the same for commercial drugs; they could also have properties that even the scientists who studied and commercialized them were not aware of. Recently, a study showed that minocycline, a widely used antibiotic, could delay the onset of dementia, which was surprising. Minocycline was already being sold as its own product, but no one had known that it had therapeutic effects on dementia.

It was natural; how could someone imagine a toxin, which was used to kill harmful bacteria in the gut could help prevent brain cells from being destroyed? There was no reason to experiment because no one would expect something like that, and so, its effects would never be known.

Similarly, how could someone figure out that an ointment treatment for cuts could be given to dogs to suppress the growth of the parvovirus and infections? If it wasn't for Rosaline, nobody would have known it for a hundred years.

To Song Ji-Hyun, who was a pharmacist very knowledgeable in drugs, it looked like Young-Joon was magical.

'But I can't tell her that Rosaline is the one who told me.'

Young-Joon made an excuse.

"There was some data related to this from our company. I used it because it was an emergency and your dog was in bad shape, but you can't go around

talking about it, okay? I trusted you and used it because it was urgent. I couldn't let your dog die."

Song Ji-Hyun just stared at Young-Joon in surprise. It seemed like she was still in shock.

"Anyway, go to the vet once it opens. I'll be on my way. I kind of want to take a shower since I exercised," Young-Joon hurriedly made an excuse to leave.

"Wait!"

Song Ji-Hyun quickly stopped him as Young-Joon was about to leave.

"Um..."

She looked a little flushed.

"Thank you. I'll treat you to a meal sometime. If it's okay, could I get your number..."

Song Ji-Hyun slowly gave her phone to Young-Joon.

'Holy. I've never had someone get my number in my life.'

Young-Joon took her phone and put in his number.

"You said your name was Ryu Young-Joon?" Song Ji-Hyun asked.

"Yes."

"My name is Song Ji-Hyun."

"I know, I saw your name tag that was on your gown."

"Oh, really? Anyway, I'll give you a call once Brownie gets better. Thank you."

"Alright. Take care."

Young-Joon bowed slightly and left the pharmacy.

On the way home, Young-Joon's heart was thumping with excitement from coming up with an amazing idea. He ran faster than when he was jogging and came home.

Instead of hopping in the shower, he turned on Rosaline's status window first.

'I'm going to make new drugs for animals.'

This would allow him to bypass clinical trials as a whole since he didn't need to do them. Animal experiments were the alpha and omega of drug development; if he could prove that the drug had effects during this stage, he could commercialize it right away.

It felt like he had taken a step down since he was making doggy drugs now when he made a flu treatment candidate that was worth three billion won, but it didn't matter. It was all about quantity.

Since animal disease treatments have not been studied well, there weren't many drugs that had been discovered. For example, there were five different kinds of treatments that showed up when he looked into the parvovirus. And Young-Joon would be able to patent it all since there was nothing that had been found before. He would be able to find dozens of potential drug candidates.

One sophisticated drug that cured a complex disease was good, but gathering a bunch of patents with drugs that weren't time-consuming was also good when Young-Joon didn't have any foundation yet. And since a lot of people were invested in pets now, the drugs would be pretty valuable.

It would be on a whole different level if Young-Joon expanded it to the livestock industry. There were countless animals that died every time the bird flu or cholera went around. They died meaningless deaths, and it was also a huge economic loss, even in Korea, where the industry wasn't very big. How worse would it be for places like the USA? It would have unimaginable merit.

* * *

"I'm done! Freedom!"

It was Monday past midnight. Patent Attorney Lee Hae-Won had just completed the papers necessary for the patent for Young-Joon's flu treatment. It kept her busy for the entire week. She actually had the draft finished on Thursday, but she took her time and was thorough; she had put her effort into it since Young-Joon was her first client after opening her own office, and since he had come here on Park Joo-Hyuk's recommendation.

Now, all she had to do was submit the documents and data. But she had to send them to Young-Joon first as she had to cross-check with the patent holder.

Ring.

After sending Young-Joon an email with the documents regarding the patent filing, she went onto Coupang and began to do some internet shopping.[1]

“Now, let’s have some fun.”

She saw that a portable hand warmer with a kitty character design that also worked as a charger was only 19,800 won. Lee Hae-Won bought that, considering it a gift for herself since she worked until night on the weekends.

‘I’m also out of water.’

She also ordered six two-liter water bottles.

Lee Hae-Won read a few news articles, then took some selfies and posted them on Instagram.

[It’s a Sunday, but I worked hard!! #LateNights #PatentAttorney #Patent #HaeWonInternationalPatentOffice #...]

As she was about to write #newdrug, a message notification popped up at the top of her phone screen.

[This is Young-Joon. Please give me a call when you have time. Now is fine as well if you’re awake.]

Lee Hae-Won called.

—Hello.

“Hello.”

—Sorry to bother you this late at night.

“That’s fine! I just finished your patent application documents. Did you see the email I sent you?”

—Yes, that’s the reason I messaged you.

“Yes. I will proceed with it if you’re okay with it. The experimental data just needs to be given in a year. That’s alright with you?”

—The cell experiment data will probably come out next week. It will take a little longer with the animal experiment data, though.

“Really?” Lee Hae-Won was shocked at how fast Young-Joon finished the job since it usually took people around a year.

“I guess it was a very effective drug. Let me know when you get the data. We should discuss the data together and decide what parts to take for the patent.”

—Yes, let’s do that. And I have more drugs to file patents on.

“You have more?”

—Yes. They are new drugs for pets and livestock. I want you to file them out.

Young-Joon looked through the patent application Lee Hae-Won wrote, and it was quite good. Park Joo-Hyuk had really recommended a good attorney. He decided to leave all of his new pet drugs to her.

“How many?” Lee Hae-Won asked.

—122.

“Pardon?” Lee Hae-Won reacted as if she just doubted what she heard.

—I am going to file patents for 122 drugs for thirty-four different diseases. I will send them to you right now.

Shocked, Lee Hae-Won was at a loss for words.

“ ... ”

‘122?’

Lee Hae-Won was sure she heard Young-Joon right, but she could not understand what he was saying. It kind of felt like a mukbang BJ saying that they were going to have a light snack of thirty Big Macs, two hundred fries, and three liters of Coke.[2]

“122 as in one hundred in the Arabic numbers that I know, and twenty-two more than that?”

—That’s right. It’s a lot, right?

“ ... ”

Lee Hae-Won blanked out for a bit, then asked, “122? No, how...”

—Relax, you heard me right. I’ll send you all of them by email, so please take a look at them.

“What stage are the drugs at?”

—They haven’t been synthesized yet.

“Oh, so you’re filing patents for the ones that will have therapeutic effects?”

—No. They will all be effective.

“ ... ”

—I should have results in about three months if I press Reaction Chemistry and Cell Bio hard. Although, I will have to use some money. What would your rate be at?

“I haven’t done anything this big before, so...”

—Does that mean I can’t ask you?

“No! I’ll do it! Leave it to me!” Lee Hae-Won shouted with determination.

* * *

On Monday morning, Lab Six Director Gil Hyung-Joon was shocked when he saw the documents that the law office sent him. It was because of the patent application Young-Joon filled out and the contract he electronically created.

“This crazy bastard!”

Gil Hyung-Joon threw the papers on the floor, fuming with anger. His assistant was standing near him and stared at him in surprise.

“Look at what this asshole wrote! He put his share as ten percent and left the eighty percent as funding for his department. Is the company his fxxking playground or something?!”

He slammed his fist on his desk.

“Call this bastard right now. No, I’ll do it myself. I knew what this guy would be like from the moment he swore at Director Kim. He’s a tumor to this company.”

Gil Hyung-Joon roughly grabbed his phone and dialed Young-Joon’s number.

1. Coupang is the Korean-equivalent of Amazon. ?
2. Mukbang is a broadcast/video where the host consumes food as they talk to the audience. ?

Chapter 24: The First Author (2)

Gil Hyung-Joon was about to press the phone number for the Life Creation Department, but his finger wandered in front of his phone screen. He had memorized all the department phone numbers in Lab Six, but it was a little difficult to remember their number since he had only called that garbage department a few times.

He asked his assistant, “What was the number for the Life Creation Department?”

“437...”

“Oh, wait.”

‘Let’s think about this.’

This bastard Young-Joon was one of the hottest celebrities within the entire A-Gen lab right now, and most of all, Nicholas embraced him as if he were his own. Nicholas liked Young-Joon so much that it looked like he wanted to adopt him.

After the seminar, CTO Nicholas Kim had a company dinner with only the lab directors, and he had complimented Young-Joon so much that his lips almost fell off.

“But how did a scientist as talented as him go to the Life Creation Department? Did he apply to go?” Nicholas asked.

“He had some conflict with me. I had a talk with HR and transferred him there,” Kim Hyun-Taek answered.

“That’s unfortunate. To have trouble with you out of all people... What happened?” Nicholas asked.

“Well, there were just some things that we didn’t agree on work-wise. He was talented, but also arrogant, so he didn’t get along with others that well. I was going to fire him, but I didn’t think he would make something like that.”

“Hm.”

Nicholas took a sip of his drink. After some thought, he said, “Director Gil Hyung-Joon, I assume you are going to leave them be for a year since they got the Award for Exceptional Performance?”

Gil Hyung-Joon really hated that he had to do that, but he had no other choice.

“Yes, of course.”

“Director. I really want to observe Doctor Ryu for a long time. Please try to go easy on them and look after them no matter what happens. Science is completed by one genius putting the last piece in a puzzle that ninety-nine gifted scientists put together.”

“Yes, sir.”

“The whole world will laugh at us if we lose a genius like that. Hold onto him and keep him at the company at all costs unless he swears at your face or something.”

Kim Hyun-Taek, whom Young-Joon already swore at, flinched.

“Alright,” Gil Hyung-Joon replied.

Nicholas smiled with excitement.

In the seven years they had Nicholas on as the CTO, they had never seen him this happy. A world-famous scientist like Nicholas Kim was swooning over Young-Joon right now.

Gil Hyung-Joon put down his phone. He thought it wouldn't be right for him to break his promise right on Monday morning after getting a request like that during his Friday company dinner. So, Gil Hyung-Joon read through the patent again.

'Fuck. Still, this isn't right.'

It was more ridiculous the more Gil Hyung-Joon thought about it. He could kill him or let it pass. He thought about it for a while until a good idea popped into his head. He could get someone else to do it if he couldn't handle it himself. Someone who could keep Nicholas in check and an executive who had power in another way.

As Gil Hyung-Joon signed off on Young-Joon's document, he wrote down Ji Kwang-Man for the next approval.

"Take this to management." Gil Hyung-Joon said as he gave the assistant the papers.

Ji Kwang-Man was the division manager of management at A-Gen headquarters. The management division was where patent-related documents were finalized anyway. Usually, they were taken care of by employees lower than executive managers, but Young-Joon could put the division manager's name down since it was important. He felt like this patent was worthy of a division manager's approval since it was a patent for a technology that held tremendous value.

'Ji Kwang-Man.'

"Hehehe..."

Gil Hyung-Joon couldn't help but chuckle thinking about how he was going to berate Young-Joon.

Ji Kwang-Man was called the Mad Hound at the headquarters. He was huge, including his head, and he also looked vicious, making him look like a gangster. But his personality was respectable enough that he could be treated as the gang boss.

One time, Illsung Hospital only prescribed a certain drug after getting a rebate from Roche Korea. When Ji Kwang-Man found out, he reported this to the Anti-corruption & Civil Rights Commission. Of course, this was the appropriate response.

But he didn't stop there.

He hired a bunch of actors and sent them to Illsung Hospital. They caused a scene in the lobby in front of the administration desk and exposed the hospital and their rebates. They screamed about simple and provocative stories, such as how their kid died from the hospital taking bribes and using worse drugs, in front of the patients. It was extremely impactful. Ji Kwang-Man even had reporters waiting there so that they could report that. It ended up making the front page of the morning news.

From the next day, Illsung Hospital began prescribing A-Gen products. The funny part about it was that for the product in question, Roche's product was actually a little bit better than A-Gen's. However, the image of the rebate that was put on Roche made their product look worse, and A-Gen gained rebound profits. For a while, even other university hospitals used more of A-Gen's products compared to Roche's.

That was the kind of person Ji Kwang-Man was. The government was slow, and it took a long time to sort things out legally. If Ji Kwang-Man took this path and Illsung Hospital received punishment, what kind of gains would there be for A-Gen?

'Take the surest, largest, and fastest way when taking profit.'

This was Ji Kwang-Man's philosophy.

Gil Hyung-Joon put his feet up on his desk with a smile on his face. Young-Joon, A-Gen's famous scientist with intermittent explosive disorder who cursed at Kim Hyun-Taek, against Ji Kwang-Man, the Mad Hound of Management. They were incomparable in terms of their rank in the company, but Young-Joon was a rising star that Nicholas embraced.

What if—although it wouldn't happen—Nicholas accepted this insane patent application? If Nicholas supported him that much, this could become a battle between Nicholas and Ji Kwang-Man.

Of course, whatever it was, Gil Hyung-Joon just had to sit back and watch.

* * *

There were a lot of ideas about how Gil Hyung-Joon should screw Young-Joon up, but surprisingly, no action was actually taken against him.

“I can’t believe it. Do you think Gil Hyung-Joon really accepted it?” Jung Hae-Rim asked during lunch.

“But if he did, management would call him, saying that there was something wrong with the patent application that someone named Ryu Young-Joon from your lab submitted,” Cheon Ji-Myung replied.

“They will call us during the afternoon,” Park Dong-Hyun added. “You know management people start their work after eating lunch. They take such a long time with something they can get done by just submitting one document. It’s frustrating.”

However, Park Dong-Hyun’s prediction was wrong; instead of a phone call, someone came all the way down to the lab. It was Manager Yoon Bo-Hyun from management.

At one o’clock in the afternoon, he went straight to the Life Creation Department as soon as he got his visitor pass from the lab entrance.

“Hello,” Yoon Bo-Hyun said, standing in front of the office entrance.

“Who are you?” Park Dong-Hyun asked as he was about to enter the lab.

“I’m Manager Yoon Bo-Hyun from management.”

“Ah, yes. Hello.”

“Is Scientist Ryu Young-Joon here by chance?”

“Young-Joon.”

Park Dong-Hyun called him over. Young-Joon was sitting in front of his computer with an academic paper file opened, pretending to read it. He was actually tapping on Rosaline’s status window, designing his next experiment with stem cells.

“Did you call for me?” Young-Joon looked up over the partition and asked.

“Here. Manager Yoon Bo-Hyun is here to see you.”

Young-Joon shook hands with Yoon Bo-Hyun and moved to the small conference room.

“Doctor Ryu, how have you been? We’ve seen each other before, right?”

Yoon Bo-Hyun made small talk with Young-Joon as they walked to the conference room.

Yoon Bo-Hyun was right; he and Young-Joon had seen each other before. They saw each other once, and it was a nightmare of a memory for Young-Joon. Yoon Bo-Hyun was the person who asked him to buy Illoa, Celligener’s liver cancer treatment, and conduct a comparative experiment. He was an assistant manager then, but he had already become a manager. Young-Joon didn’t get a good vibe from him for some reason.

Yoon Bo-Hyun reached into his bag and gave something to him when they arrived at the small conference room. It was a can of coffee from the convenience store.

“Have it. I bought it at the GS25 near here,” Yoon Bo-Hyun said to Young-Joon.[1]

“There’s a coffee machine in here and a cafe downstairs as well.”

“But canned coffee is so much better, don’t you think? Do I just have cheap taste? Haha.”

Young-Joon opened his canned coffee and took a sip. It had gotten a little cold, and it was now lukewarm.

“There’s a rumor going around that you killed it at the seminar, Doctor Ryu,” Yoon Bo-Hyun said as he took a sip of his coffee.

“I did.”

“A scientist interrupted a presentation with all the lab directors present and showed astonishing data, then bam! I heard you received a standing ovation from the CTO?”

“Well, I guess so.”

“Wow, amazing. I thought it was some TV show, you know? If you get a call to shoot something here, call me. I want to see what goes on.”

“Do you mind getting to the point? I have an experiment to run. What do you have for me?” Young-Joon asked.

“Oh right. We wouldn’t want to keep our most expensive employee here. I’m sorry.”

Yoon Bo-Hyun pulled out a bundle of papers from his briefcase.

[Patent Application]

[Inventor: Ryu Young-Joon, Park Dong-Hyun, Jung Hae-Rim, Koh Soon-Yeol. This includes the stem cell technology that dedifferentiated a normal somatic cell into an embryonic stem cell.]

Yoon Bo-Hyun grinned.

“I don’t know why someone as smart as you made this kind of mistake. The share ratio is especially weird.” Yoon Bo-Hyun asked.

“Everything written there is right. I am taking ten percent, Seniors Koh Soon-Yeol, Park Dong-Hyun, and Jung Hae-Rim get three percent each. The headquarters and Lab Six both get 0.5 percent, and the rest go to the Life Creation Department. I am thinking of having the final approval of those funds with a separate contract.”

Yoon Bo-Hyun glared at Young-Joon for a little bit.

“Doctor Ryu, share ratios like this are unheard of. They don’t exist.”

“We would be setting a good example.”

“Why do you want the Life Creation Department to have a share?” Yoon Bo-Hyun asked.

“There are a lot of things I want to study. The reason I have the final approval is to not let others use it. I trust our department members, but HR could transfer other people to our team, right? Since I am the one who invented it, I think I have that right. Well, it’s not like I’m going to use it for personal use. I will write a proposal and leave it for evaluation as well.”

“... *Sigh*, this isn't going to be easy. This is just a completely personal question, but why did you put the one percent for the headquarters and the labs? Surely, you didn't seriously consider the company's sake when you wrote this insane patent application.”

“I did genuinely consider the company's sake. I got help from the headquarters' patent team in developing the technology and writing the application, and I used Lab Six's facilities too. To be honest, I thought it was like a 0.3 percent contribution, but I was easy on you. Consider it on the house.”

“Are you going to fight the company or something?”

“To be honest, I don't even understand why I have to fight. It was my idea, my results from experimentation, and the scientists at our department found the data to prove it. Didn't I give the company a lot more than it actually deserves?”

“Management is hitting the roof over this right now. If this doesn't get taken care of here with me, you'll be summoned to the headquarters. And you must put Lab Director Gil Hyung-Joon's name on it.”

“The first time I saw his face after transferring here was at the seminar. And do you think he would have allowed me to do this experiment if I told him that I was working on induced pluripotent stem cells before meeting him? No, he would have stopped me. He has no share.”

“... You have a unique way of thinking.”

“Including them because they are your superiors or supervisors. Putting them as the first author even though they didn't do anything just because they oversaw the project. I cannot allow those kinds of things. This is correct according to research ethics.”

“You're not going to listen even if I keep talking, are you?” Yoon Bo-Hyun asked.

“Of course not,” Young-Joon replied.

“Then you will be summoned to the management headquarters.”

“Alright. I’ll finish up the experiment I was doing and head there right away. Please make an appointment for me.”

As Young-Joon was about to get up, Yoon Bo-Hyun frowned.

“Doctor Ryu, sit.”

“Do you have more to say?”

“Thanks to you, the Life Creation Department is finally starting to have a better image. But are you going to piss off the superiors again like this?”

“... Manager Yoon.”

“Yes.”

“Do you think I’d be in this department if I was scared of that?”

“Hm...”

“Please tell that to the superiors and let the patent pass as is. That’s the best decision.”

“Why don’t you just come with me? Finish up your experiment and come back,” Yoon Bo-Hyun said with a smirk on his face.

A-Gen Headquarters was in Yeoksam. The headquarters did not have a lab; they only took care of the business aspect. Departments like the management division and the finance division were all there. Low-ranking scientists didn’t really have any reason to go visit the headquarters.

However, at four o’clock in the afternoon, Young-Joon was there. The atmosphere in the building was tense.

As Young-Joon went into the division manager’s office, Yoon Bo-Hyun, who returned without any results, began chatting with Executive Manager Lee Hyun-Woo.

“I failed. He’s a complete lunatic.”

“But our manager is also very...” Lee Hyun-Woo said in a worried voice.

“Well yes, but our manager is predictable since he only works for profit. But Young-Joon... He kind of feels like a lunatic who has strong beliefs. He is devout to research ethics. From what I can tell, I bet he bows at Kant’s grave three times before going to bed.

* * *

Ji Kwang-Man gave Young-Joon a bottle of cold water.

“I heard that Yoon Bo-Hyun was unsuccessful in persuading you,” Ji Kwang-Man said.

“Yes.”

“What is it that you want, Doctor Ryu?”

“It’s to get this patent application finished.”

“No,” Ji Kwang-Man said as he shook his head. “I’m asking what you want to do in the future after getting this patent approved.”

“I will further develop iPSCs and create a good drug.”

Ji Kwang-Man just silently stared at Young-Joon. Ji Kwang-Man’s face was twice the size of Park So-Yeon’s. His protruding eyes had an overwhelming weight to them.

“This is a direct defiance of orders, and you’re interfering with management. What are you going to do if I refuse?” Ji Kwang-Man asked.

“Then I will give up patenting the current item, quit, and then go to the US. I will file the patent there again, and I will go to Pfizer with that same condition.”

“...Do you think that will work? That patent is ours, according to regulations regarding employee inventions. What will you do if we sue you?”

“It’s going to be hard to prove that part. My job responsibilities are about life creation, not stem cells. And actually, A-Gen’s facilities had a trivial effect. This is worth having a legal dispute over.”

“ ... ”

“Since Pfizer is money-mad too, they are going to protect me to take the patent worth hundreds of trillions of dollars. If so, you will be making this an international battle. It doesn’t matter if I don’t win; A-Gen would lose a tremendous amount of time,” Young-Joon said. He added, “And in the meantime, I will finish the follow-up research with these stem cells at Pfizer and finish treating nerve damage in clinical trials. A-Gen would lose priority in this entire field.”

1. GS25 is a famous convenience store chain in Korea. ?

Chapter 25: The First Author (3)

Division Manager Ji Kwang-Man stared at Young-Joon in thought. His protruding eyes were extremely intense and made Young-Joon slightly uncomfortable. He looked like a thousand-old toad that was staring at its prey before it was about to eat it.

But weirdly, Ji Kwang-Man’s facial expression did not seem hostile; it just looked like he was running calculations in his head. He didn’t say anything, but Young-Joon could see that he was considering every possible scenario and calculating the gains and losses of each one.

Young-Joon felt his hands sweat a little. He was a little nervous as Ji Kwang-Man was staying silent for a while, but he held his breath and waited cautiously.

“Interesting.” Ji Kwang-Man opened his mouth. “It’s an interesting story. You’re the most fascinating person I’ve met recently, Doctor Ryu.”

Young-Joon stayed silent.

“But Doctor Ryu, do I look like someone who would be flustered because a mere scientist is threatening to go to Pfizer?”

“I don’t know. But what I can tell is that you don’t seem like a person to judge someone entirely on their rank.”

Ji Kwang-Man chuckled.

“You’re not backing down even a little bit, are you? You definitely have the guts to curse at Director Kim... but you know you can only do things like that if

you have the skills to back you up, right? If you don't, it's nothing but acting out."

"Of course," Young-Joon replied.

"How are you going to prove that you're talented? I know that you presented great results at the seminar. But your past performance does not matter when we are talking about your next performance, right?"

"I will treat nerve damage with iPSCs. I will successfully treat it in animal experiments, so please prepare a clinical trial for it."

"How long do you need?"

"A month should be enough."

"Doctor Ryu, I majored in business, but I also studied biology on the side. I may not know how to do experiments, but I know as much theory as a newbie scientist. I also know how monumental your iPSC technology is, and I also know that it's in its early stages. But you're saying that you're going to finish pre-clinical trial experiments in just a month?"

"I can do it."

"It's something that other scientists couldn't do, even if they were given decades. You know that, right?"

"Yes."

"...Hm."

Ji Kwang-Man rose from his seat and walked over to the window. He crossed his arms and looked out the window in thought.

"Doctor Ryu, I am a businessman, so I only think about profit. No matter what it is, if I consider the gains and losses and I can profit from it, I'll do it. Whether it be giving an associate manager-level employee a right to the final approval of a huge budget or giving an individual ten percent of a huge patent."

"..."

"But I'm not sure whether it will be a gain for the company to give you such powers, Doctor Ryu."

Ji Kwang-Man turned his head and glared at Young-Joon.

“You can finish pre-clinical trial experiments for treating nerve damage with iPSCs in a month? If you’re that talented, why are you still at our company? If it were me, I would start my own business. You would earn more money that way and be treated better.”

“Even if I did, all I would be able to make would be trivial drugs. The only place that has the infrastructure to grow artificial organs with iPSCs and differentiate them into new tissue is this place. And that’s the kind of research I want to do.”

“Is that all?”

“It is. There are countless patients who are living a hard life with irreversible damage in their bodies. I want to develop iPSCs and treat people like that.”

“I can’t really understand people like you, Doctor Ryu. You probably hate the company after fighting with Director Kim Hyun-Taek like that, but the only reason you’re staying is because you want to study iPSCs, and the only place that has the infrastructure is here?”

“That’s correct.”

“Are you saying it’s just because of your pure passion for developing new drugs?”

“Do you know the reason why I fought against Director Kim and got demoted?”

Ji Kwang-Man closed his eyes.

“I do.”

It all happened after A-Gen destroyed a superior liver cancer drug that Celligener developed. After knowing about it, Young-Joon exploded in anger, saying that it was against research ethics, and he ended up cursing Kim Hyun-Taek in his face and fighting him.

‘So, what kind of person is Ryu Young-Joon?’

If Young-Joon thought politically, even just a little bit, he wouldn’t have been able to go against a person of power like Kim Hyun-Taek. That was an

accident that happened because Young-Joon was a scientist who was truly pure and ethical, and could not calculate his gains and losses.

That was what Yoon Bo-Hyun reported as well; Young-Joon was an oddball genius who was crazy about science and research ethics.

If Young-Joon started his own business with his talent, he would make a lot of small drugs and get rich; he would live out the rest of his life loaded with money. But he was saying that the reason he was staying at A-Gen was because he wanted to develop iPSCs into a treatment.

If snakes like Gil Hyung-Joon said anything like that, he would have stopped them there. He wouldn't have believed them since it would be dangerous for someone who had the power to control a huge budget like that to go against management.

'But what precedents has this young man shown?'

"..."

Ji Kwang-Man opened his eyes.

"Alright. I will give you one month."

'Whatever. I'll play his game and I'll watch him a little longer.'

"Complete your animal model experiments successfully and bring me the results in a month. In the meantime, I'll put this as a provisional application, and I will leave the status of this contract as pending, too."

"Please assure me that you will proceed as is if I succeed."

"If you succeed, I will approve of this patent application request and your contract. I give you my word. And one more thing." Ji Kwang-Man added, "I will give the Stem Cells Department the same assignment. Please share the iPSC technology with them. I will not interfere with whatever disease model you treat with it. You and the Stem Cell Department can have different results."

"The Stem Cells Department... Like you said, it is not easy to successfully treat a disease in an animal model in a month. I do not want to put any pressure on that department."

“I am not going to punish them or anything if they are unable to do it. But to really prove that you are more exceptional than other scientists and that you are valuable enough for us to give you almost ninety percent of the shares of a patent, we need a comparison group, do we not?”

“... Alright.”

Young-Joon smiled slightly when Ji Kwang-Man mentioned a comparison group. It was a scientific term that referred to a separate sample that was only treated with the competitive drug when trying to prove a candidate drug's effectiveness.

Division Manager Ji Kwang-Man. There were countless rumors that he was the Mad Hound or that he was a gang member, but now that Young-Joon met him, he was just an extremely logical person. There were times when extremely rational and calculated judgements could paradoxically look monstrous or like a maniac.

That was the kind of person Ji Kwang-Man was; he was a sociopathic person who would do anything and everything for profit and success. There was a reason why people were afraid of him.

Young-Joon thought, *‘Ah, now that I think of it, I have someone worse than that in my head.’*

Young-Joon remembered Rosaline, who calculated the breakeven point with human lives and suggested that they eradicate the flu by spreading the disease intentionally. Rosaline was a true lunatic—a psychopath on another level... It was weird, but Young-Joon felt a little reassured.

“Then I will see you in a month.”

Young-Joon bowed and left.

* * *

‘One month...’

Young-Joon had set the conditions himself, but he almost felt sorry for the Stem Cells Department. Even if he gave them the recipe to make induced pluripotent stem cells, it would take over a month just to recreate that. But to successfully treat an animal disease model...

'If they could do that, none of the Stem Cell Department members would be there. They would be lab directors...'

But since they were competing now, he was going to give it everything he had and surpass them.

Young-Joon went to find Lead Scientist Bae Sun-Mi. She was looking at nude mouse model data on her computer.

"Lead Bae." magic

When Young-Joon called her, she turned and looked at Young-Joon, startled.

"You're looking at nude mice."

"Haha, it's not really related to what we do. You caught me fooling around."

A little embarrassed, Bae Sun-Mi closed the browser on her computer.

Nude mice were a type of experiment rats that had no immune system. Additionally, they also had no fur, which gave them their name. They were usually used when studying immune responses.

Bae Sun-Mi was a scientist who used to work at the Experiment Animal Resource Center, and she usually performed animal experiments. She ended up here after having some conflict with her superiors about maternity leave and other things when she had her second child. But even when she was doing biosynthesis experiments here, she really missed animal experiments. Because of that, she sometimes looked through new animal models, or the animal experiment services that A-Gen and other companies sold as products.

"Do you think we could do animal experiments?" Young-Joon asked Bae Sun-Mi.

"In our department?"

"I think mouse experiments will be good."

"Wow. Do you have something in mind?"

"I'm going to make optic nerves," Young-Joon replied.

Shock painted Bae Sun-Mi's face; she couldn't understand what Young-Joon was saying.

"Optic... nerves?"

"Yes."

"The stuff that's in the retina of your eye? The optic nerves that I know?"

"Yes."

"You can make that with stem cells?"

"Stem cells can differentiate into all kinds of cells. Of course nerve cells are possible."

To Bae Sun-Mi, it was like Young-Joon was saying, "A spaceship can go to outer space, and it can obviously go to Mars or Jupiter since it could fly in space. So, why don't we have our next company barbecue in Jupiter?"

Of course iPSCs were incredible, but how could they make optic nerve cells with those? It was uncharted territory. It wasn't even a joke since they knew nothing about it.

But there was a reason why Young-Joon set such a difficult target. This was the starting gun that was going to announce a new trend in medicine. He had to build his reputation worldwide and leave a huge impact. The target to reach for this was vision.

A few years ago, there was big news about a pharmaceutical company called Spark releasing a new drug called Luxterna. This drug was a type of gene therapy that acted on the retina. It used a virus to insert an artificially synthesized RPE65 gene in patients with genetic diseases that destroyed their RPE65 gene.

When it was inserted, patients went from complete blindness to having vision that allowed them to see the grayscale and contrast. It wasn't perfect, but it drastically improved one's quality of life. There was a huge difference in everyday life between only seeing pitch black and being able to see shapes and the grayscale.

The drug cost one million won per eye. It was extremely expensive, but people were lining up to do it. It was a little dramatic, but people probably wanted to sell their liver or part of their kidney to do it if they could.

That was how much humans relied on the sense of vision. And after Luxterna achieved tremendous greatness, a fascinating trend happened in the pharmaceutical industry: a gene therapy boom. The story of opening a blind man's eye was incredibly impactful. The people who were against gene therapy, saying that its safety hadn't been proven and could be dangerous, had lost their justification.

'Dangerous or not, our child is about to die! Luxterna worked, too!'

The voices of the people against gene therapy were buried by the overwhelming voices of people looking for other gene therapies like Luxterna.

The atmosphere of pharmaceutical companies was completely turned upside down, and they could no longer suppress the development of gene therapies. Several pharmaceutical companies including A-Gen poured a tremendous amount of their budget into developing gene therapies, and governments also supported them with huge amounts of money. As a result, dozens of new drugs had entered clinical trials in just a few years.

It was the same for stem cells. What Young-Joon was doing was the first ever induced pluripotent stem cell therapy. He had to achieve greatness by having a huge impact on the world. He had to be at the center of attention by standing out in the medical field. He had to make Ji Kwang-Man, who was basically testing him, kneel and thank him with tears in his eyes. That would allow subsequent drugs using iPSCs to cruise through without difficulty.

"Optic nerve cells are much easier to achieve compared to things like the spine or brain. But it's significant in that it can dramatically improve a patient's quality of life," Young-Joon said.

"Yeah sure, but shouldn't we try easier..." Bae Sun-Mi mumbled doubtfully.

"It's okay, we'll be able to do it. Lead Bae, do you think we could get some mice models with degenerated retinas? End-stage."

A mice model of end-stage degenerated retinas meant that the mice's cells in the retina did not work at all; the mice were completely blind. Young-Joon was

going to create new optic nerves for them. He was going to create a new sense—vision—in mice that would have never seen anything in their life.

Luxterna was a gene therapy that barely improved the state of a specific genetic condition on perfectly normal optic nerve cells. Even so, it caused huge ripples throughout the field. But what Young-Joon was doing was going to reconstruct completely destroyed optic nerve cells as a whole.

It was not just going to be a couple of mice opening their eyes; scientists and doctors worldwide would be opening their eyes to a new future of medicine.

“I’ll try to get them. No matter what.” Bae Sun-Mi answered with a firm voice.

“Thank you,” Young-Joon replied.

Chapter 26: The First Author (4)

Bae Sun-Mi requested twenty-four retinal degeneration mouse models from the Experiment Animal Resource Center. And on the second day, someone from the Research Support Department showed up with a cart that had six cages on it.

Each individual patient’s cells had to be used when making induced pluripotent stem cells, and this was the same for mice as well. Young-Joon harvested fibroblast cells from twenty out of the twenty-four mice and dedifferentiated them into stem cells by inserting the four genes into them.

But this was not all; Young-Joon still had to differentiate those cells into optic nerve cells. He used the lentivirus to introduce a few new kinds of genes and grew them carefully for ten days by controlling the expression level.

On Monday morning, Young-Joon opened the incubator and took out the nutrient broth. The broth contained hydrocortisone at a five micromolar concentration. It was also treated with EGF and dorsomorphin. He did it all according to what Rosaline directed him to do. The results were also exactly what Rosaline predicted: the stem cells differentiated into optic nerve cells. It worked.

‘I made optic nerve cells.’

Young-Joon felt chills down his body. He couldn't believe that he really made artificial optic nerve cells in just ten days. Now, he had to inject this in the eyes of the retinal degeneration mice with a syringe.

"Lead Bae, could you help me?" Young-Joon asked.

He went into the animal experiment lab with Bae Sun-Mi, gave each of the mice a number, then picked one up. This was the difficult part; Young-Joon had to inject the optic nerve cells into the mouse's eyes. He needed to anesthetize the mice and then precisely inject into the sub-retinal part of the eye. He needed a very experienced and skilled technician for this, and Bae Sun-Mi was this technician. magic

"I'm a little nervous. It's been a long time since I've done this."

Bae Sun-Mi gulped as she weighed the mouse.

"Two hundred seventy grams."

"You're going to anesthetize them with ketamine and xylazine, right? Into their arteries?" Young-Joon asked.

"Yes," Bae Sun-Mi replied.

"The amount?"

Bae Sun-Mi tapped her calculator.

"1.04 grams of ketamine. And 248.4 milligrams of xylazine."

Young-Joon prepared the anesthetic. Carefully, Bae Sun-Mi pierced the needle into the mouse's artery and pushed in the anesthetic. After a moment, the mouse stopped moving.

Bae Sun-Mi put the mouse on the operating microscope so that the light was focused on the retina of the mouse. Then, she drew the optic nerve cells with a microsyringe.

"Phew..."

Bae Sun-Mi's hands trembled a little. The end of the needle was right in front of the mouse's eye, but it could not go in. She tried a few times, then put down the needle.

“I can’t do it...” She said. “It’s been too long since I’ve done it... I’m sorry.”

“I’ll try.”

Young-Joon sat in front of the microscope.

“Doctor Ryu? Have you done animal experiments before?”

“No.”

A scientist who has never done an animal experiment injecting something into the retina? It was no different from sacrificing one mouse, but Young-Joon could do it.

[Synchronization Mode Activate!]

Synchronization Mode allowed Young-Joon to observe biological processes at the angstrom level. The angstrom was usually a unit used to determine the movement of atoms. To put it into terms the public was more familiar with, it was basically 0.1 nanometers. Of course, 0.1 nanometers wasn’t a normal measurement used in everyday life. It was a rough estimate, but it was about one millionth of the width of a single strand of hair.

The end of the needle pierced above the iris of the eye. The nozzle, which smoothly followed the rim of the iris, stopped in front of the degenerated retina.

Sheee...

Young-Joon could hear the cells being dispersed from the nozzle as his senses were heightened because of his Synchronization Mode. The optic nerve cells were sticking to the retina of the mouse.

Bae Sun-Mi was in shock at the extremely precise injection.

“What? Are you a robot or something...”

“That should’ve been good, right?” Young-Joon asked.

“That was one of the most perfect injections I’ve seen.”

“Let’s do the rest of them quickly together.”

“I’ll do it, too.”

Bae Sun-Mi regained courage along with her skills from her prime time. With her, Young-Joon anesthetized each mouse and injected stem cells into their retina. Of course, Young-Joon was much faster; he did seven mice in the time Bae Sun-Mi did two, but that was it.

[No more fitness remaining.]

No matter how fast Young-Joon did it, his limit was seven.

“My eyes are a little sore... I’ll take my time doing them, haha...”

Young-Joon made an excuse.

“Of course. Don’t worry about it, Doctor Ryu.”

Bae Sun-Mi sped up a little.

‘It’s definitely much easier to have a technician like Bae Sun-Mi in the same team.’

Bae Sun-Mi injected optic nerve cells into the mice quickly and precisely. Now, all they had to do was wait for the mice to wake up from the anesthetic and recover their vision.

“Good work, Lead Bae.”

Young-Joon smiled brightly at Bae Sun-Mi.

“If this succeeds, I’m going to write a new patent and a paper. Your name will be in it, too.”

“Thank you. I’ll have my name on a big paper thanks to you, Doctor Ryu.”

“I look forward to your help on animal experiments.”

“Trust me. I was the best scientist at the Experiment Animal Resource Center back in the years.”

“Haha, thank you.”

Young-Joon left the lab and opened his phone. He had an email.

[Your manuscript has been accepted.]

It was an email from the editor of the *Science* journal. It said that the paper Young-Joon submitted had been approved.

* * *

There were three major journals in biology: *Science*, *Nature*, and *Cell*. They were the best scientific journals in the world, and every scientist's dream. Most university professors had never published any papers in these journals.

It was natural as most papers in these kinds of journals usually had a very profound impact on the scientific community or provided extensive amounts of data through extremely strict experiments. Usually, most labs and researchers did not have the capital or facilities to do a project that big nor did they have the ability to produce data like that.

Then, which was the best: *Science*, *Nature*, or *Cell*? Each of them differed a little in their specialties, but *Science* was considered the best out of the three in terms of public image. It was a journal that had grown with the support of Thomas Edison and Graham Bell. It became a world-class journal as papers like Einstein's study on the gravitational lens, Hubble's study on the galaxy, the design and plan for the Apollo program, and early papers on AIDS.

Samuel, the editor-in-chief of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the publisher of *Science*, was in shock when he read the paper that was sent to him.

"What the..."[1]

The paper was about how they dedifferentiated normal cells into stem cells. He had just read the first part, and it was insane; it was the most revolutionary paper he had seen in the past few years.

Young-Joon Ryu, the first author and corresponding author. Soon-Yeol Koh, Hae-Rim Jung, and Dong-Hyun Park were the three authors after him. There were just four people.

From Samuel's experience, a study like this had to be intensely studied for years by huge teams such as Harvard or Cold Spring Harbor. That would result in dozens of authors, and a few of them would probably be professors.

Also, there would normally be two or three co-first authors, but this paper only had one first author and corresponding author.

“Young-Joon Ryu. Who is this person?” Samuel asked Jessie, an editor.

“He’s a scientist that’s working at A-Gen.”

“This is fake, right? It makes no sense that they did this with just four people, but the fact that this person is the only first author and the corresponding author means that they carried this project on their own. How did he...”

“It’s most likely true. They wrote the analysis of the process of dedifferentiation in the discussion part perfectly, right? Take a look. A-Gen is distributing press releases right now.”

“Oh my god...”

Samuel was at a loss for words after he read all of the discussion of the paper.

“Put this on the front page of the journal release next month. And let’s get an interview, too. We have an editor that can speak Korean, right? Or we can hire an interpreter...”

“But you know the letter they sent to the editor? The one separate from the paper manuscript,” Jessie said to Samuel.

“A letter?”

Samuel opened the letter attached to the back of the manuscript.

“If you read it, he asked us to not release it for a month and wait.”

“Why?”

“He said that he was going to differentiate the iPSCs back into optic nerve cells and get retinal degenerative mice to regain vision.”

“What kind of crazy talk is that?”

“He asked us to release it with this one as a special once the data comes out.”

Clatter.

Samuel dropped his pen on the floor. These induced pluripotent stem cells alone were big enough to grab the attention of scientists all around the world. It was a paper that would be on the front page of *Science*, the best scientific journal in the world. After it gets published, a lot of universities would probably invite him to their school to teach. If he went to a conference, countless scientists would come over for a handshake and ask him to do a project together.

'But is he saying that it's not enough? He's going to achieve the next level of feats and publish it at once? Curing a retinal degenerative model by creating optic nerve cells? In a month? How can this be possible?'

"It... It doesn't make sense. I have to send someone. Jessie, get some volunteers to meet Doctor Ryu to see the data in person and interview him. I have never heard of nor seen a scientist like him."

"I'll go."

Jessie raised her hand up high like she was waiting for this.

"You?" Samuel asked.

"Yes."

"But you can't speak Korean."

"I'll bring an interpreter. I've always wanted to visit Korea. I'm a fan of BTS."

"You're not going on vacation, you know."

"Of course. I'll get the job done. I'm a little fascinated by Doctor Ryu now, too."

* * *

Jessie got off at the Incheon International Airport with her interpreter and went to Lab Six of A-Gen. There were a lot of foreign scientists at the A-Gen labs, but Jessie was a woman who caught everyone's eye. The scientists in the lab all glanced at the beautiful blonde woman wearing tight jeans, a sweater, and a white coat whenever she walked by.

Jessie went to the Life Creation Department's office on the fourth floor of the building when it was time.

“Hello?”

Jessie greeted Young-Joon with a few lines of Korean she had prepared.

“Hello, my name is Ryu Young-Joon.”

Young-Joon shook hands with Jessie and went to the small conference room with her. She had brought her interpreter along with her, but she didn't really need him for her meeting with Young-Joon since the usual language for science was English. Most papers were in English, so people wrote them in English as well. A lot of people did their meetings in English as well.

Young-Joon put the paper's data up on the screen in the small conference room and explained each one to Jessie.

“SOX2 controls the expression of DKK1 to suppress the Wnt signal and maintains the ability of differentiation...”

Jessie's expression grew more and more ecstatic as she listened to his lecture. To be honest, she was a little doubtful at first because it was so radical, but now she had faith.

“Fantastic... You said you're going to publish this with a follow-up study, right?” Jessie asked.

“Yes. We're treating the nerves by making stem cells from the fibroblast cells of the mice and differentiating them into optic nerve cells.”

“Is that experiment going well?”

“Would you like to see?”

Young-Joon took Jessie to the lab.

“You can leave the coffee here. You're not allowed food and drinks in the lab,” Young-Joon said as he pointed to the cup of americano Jessie was holding.

They went into the animal lab together. A large box was divided into two rooms with a glass pane and black paper. The mice would be able to see the other room if Young-Joon moved the black paper, but these mice were retinal degenerative mice; normally, they should not be able to see anything.

“Number one to twenty are the mice that have been treated with stem cells, and mice numbered from twenty-one to twenty-four haven’t.”

When Young-Joon moved the paper, twenty mice that were numbered one through twenty were interested in the new space in the other room. As Young-Joon placed a fake piece of bread that had no odor in the other room, the mice that had been treated ran toward the glass wall. The other four did not react.

“Oh my god...”

Jessie stared at them in shock with her hand over her mouth.

“These mice had their vision restored?”

“We’ll produce a few more pieces of data to prove it. I’ve already written the paper. I will send it after I add the data and organize it a little.”

“Did you also do this, Doctor Ryu?”

“Me and Lead Scientist Bae Sun-Mi.”

“The two of you?”

“Yes.”

“...”

Koh Soon-Yeol, Park Dong-Hyun, and Jung Hae-Rim, the three people who were in his last paper were not here. There was someone new called Bae Sun-Mi, and again, the only first author and corresponding author was Young-Joon. Just him.

Jessie felt goosebumps all over her arms. She could just tell from how he explained the data that he had completely mastered this research. Induced pluripotent stem cells, the reconstruction of optic nerve cells and curing retinal degeneration in animal models: these great achievements that were going to be huge milestones in medicine basically had happened in the hands of this man.

Does this make sense? Jessie couldn’t even believe it after seeing it with her own eyes.

Was this really possible? Could one single scientist yield results like this?

These results would probably turn the scientific community as well as the entire medical industry upside down. It wouldn't be able to cure all eye diseases, but he would be able to rescue quite a large fraction of blind people.

Jessie gulped.

"I will prepare clinical trials right after the publication," Young-Joon said.

"... Doctor Ryu, this is research that could get you the Nobel Prize. Maybe not right away, but you will definitely receive the award when you're older and more experienced."

"Is that so?"

"I want to do an interview. I want to publish this as the cover of the next edition of *Science* and do a feature series on this. I want to put your interview and picture on the front page."

Jessie knew that she couldn't let this go. This could be an interview more important than the huge paper on stem cells and optic nerve treatment.

A new star of biology. The most revolutionary person after Darwin.

Jessie knew that she could not lose him to *Nature* or *Cell*. *Science* had to be the first one to report that a genius like Young-Joon took a giant step to advance science.

1. Samuel and Jessie, editors from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, are speaking in English. ?

Chapter 27: A Supernova In the Scientific Community (1)

The interview did not take too long as Young-Joon had already prepared what he was going to say. Jessie also thought that this interview may be more important than the paper itself, but Young-Joon was sure; it was more important, especially for his future.

Young-Joon had prepared for this interview a while ago. It was an interview that scientists all around the world were going to see, and countless reporters in Korea would fight to publish it first.

For a moment, a massive amount of fame and honor would be given to him, and Young-Joon could not miss that opportunity. However, he had to get the timing right as the deadline for his promise to Ji Kwang-Man was getting close. This couldn't blow up too fast, and it couldn't be too late since all the excitement would die down. Young-Joon was about to take a bold first step toward the goal of becoming A-Gen's largest shareholder and CEO.

When Young-Joon finished the interview, it was time for him to go home. He thought it would be okay if he produced the data to prove the retinal degenerative mice regained vision a little slower.

"I'm heading out. Good work, everyone."

Young-Joon said goodbye to the members of the Life Creation Department.

"Take care!"

"Have a great weekend!"

Jung Hae-Rim and Bae Sun-Mi waved.

As Young-Joon was going down on the elevator, he saw that he had missed a call from someone. It was from a number he didn't know. He pressed the button to return the call.

—Hello?

It was the voice of a young woman.

"I called because I missed a call from this number."

—Oh, yes. This is Young-Joon's phone, right?

"Yes it is."

—I'm... Song Ji-Hyun. From the pharmacy outside Jungyoon University.

"Oh, yes. Hello."

—Haha, hello.

Song Ji-Hyun laughed as if she was a little embarrassed. Then, there was a moment of awkward silence.

—My Brownie is healthy thanks to you. She's in the hospital right now, but they said she'll get better soon.

“That’s a relief. But what did you call me for?”

—Oh, did you get off work by chance?

“Yes, I just left.”

Again, there was a moment of silence.

—Then, um... Do you want to grab dinner together if you haven't yet? We could grab drinks if you want.

Song Ji-Hyun asked Young-Joon cautiously. magic

“Do you like drinking?”

—I kind of want to today.

“Then, should we go somewhere like an izakaya?”

—Sure. Do you want to meet me at the intersection in front of Jungyoon University? There's a good place around there that I know of.

“I think I know where you're talking about. Late Night Kiyoi?”

—Yes! How did you know?

“Because I've lived there for ten years. I think I'll arrive there in about thirty minutes. I'll meet you there.”

* * *

Young-Joon met Song Ji-Hyun at the intersection in front of Jungyoon University, and she was shockingly beautiful. He did think that she was pretty, but she was even more beautiful when she was dressed up.

“How is your dog? It was parvo, right?” Young-Joon asked Song Ji-Hyun on the way to the izakaya.

“It was. And she's much better now. I thought something was going to happen to her when she collapsed, but she lived thanks to you.”

“That’s good.”

“Do you have a girlfriend?”

“No.”

“That’s a relief.”

‘A relief?’

As Young-Joon stared at her, she said, surprised, “Oh! I just thought it wouldn’t be right to call you out for drinks if you had a girlfriend. So...”

“Oh, okay.”

Kiyoi was a Japanese bar with rooms. The rooms weren’t closed off with doors, but big curtain-like pieces of fabric with traditional Japanese drawings separated the room from the outside.

Young-Joon and Song Ji-Hyun got a table and sat down.

“What would you like? It’s on me,” Song Ji-Hyun said.

“Can I have something expensive?”

“Of course. You saved Brownie’s life.”

“But why did you name a golden retriever Brownie? Don’t you usually name them by their color?”

“It’s because I like brownies.”

“Oh, you like sweets.”

“Brownie’s mom’s name is Whipped Cream.”

“Wow, you really like sweets... Do you eat sweets with alcohol, too?”

“No, anything is fine. And is there anything sweet at an izakaya anyway?”

“No. Should we get sukiyaki?” Young-Joon asked as he pointed to the menu. Song Ji-Hyun smiled.

“Sure. What would you like to drink?” Song Ji-Hyun asked.

“Soju?”

“What about sake?”

“Hm, I guess you’re loaded.”

“Someone came to our pharmacy and got probiotics and vitamin supplements and three bottles of cold medicine. I made a lot of money thanks to him.”

“I’ll keep buying it from there when I run out of probiotics. I’ll get the one with bifidobacterium, the one you said was good for constipation. The one that you take.”

“Agh... That’s not true. I don’t take it because of that.”

After they exchanged a few jokes, Song Ji-Hyun ordered the food and drinks. Then, she began to ask Young-Joon a bunch of things from how old he was, to how his research on stem cells was going and how he found his work. But she did not ask where he worked.

Young-Joon was preparing himself mentally as he knew that Song Ji-Hyun would not like it if he told her that he worked at A-Gen. Then, he asked, “Ji-Hyun, why did you take time off work?”

“Hm.”

Song Ji-Hyun became noticeably downhearted. Song Ji-Hyun’s expression was so familiar that he almost asked her if she was punished after cursing at someone at her company.

“Our company, Celligener, is basically a vassal of A-Gen.”

“Pardon?”

Young-Joon’s eyes widened.

“A-Gen invested a lot of money into Celligener, and our management is being dominated by that capital.”

“What are you talking about? I thought your company sold the liver cancer drug you made to A-Gen?”

“We did.”

“Then you would have some money. Why would you get someone like A-Gen to invest?”

“We didn’t get the investment after selling the patent to the new drug.”

“Then what was it?”

“The condition to sell it was an investment.”

‘What kind of bullshit was this? Didn’t A-Gen pay them ten billion won for the patent for the treatment? But that was investment?’

“What kind of contract did you sign for that? So, they were taking the new liver cancer drug, this huge new technology, and on top of that, they are taking more if their investment is profitable?”

“It’s unfair.”

“Why on Earth did you sell your drug under those conditions?”

“We were threatened.”

“What?”

“They said that Celligener could be a huge pharmaceutical company if they accept this investment offer, but we would have to close our doors if we refused.”

“That’s what they said? Really?”

“Word for word. I still remember a few of them. Their faces and their names and their position.”

“... Who was it?”

“First of all, Kim Hyun-Taek, the lab director of A-Gen,” Song Ji-Hyun said.

Young-Joon closed his eyes. It was Kim Hyun-Taek again.

‘Damn it. This damn old snake...’

“There were a few people from management as well. This person named Yoon Bo-Hyun was an assistant manager, and I remember him especially well. He was very smirky.”

Yoon Bo-Hyun. He was an assistant manager at the time, but now he was a manager. It was because of Yoon Bo-Hyun that Young-Joon tested Cellicure, the liver cancer treatment drug from Celligener. He had come to the lab from management and asked Young-Joon himself to conduct an experiment with it.

Young-Joon also thought it was a little odd as scientists were usually assigned things from the lab director. It was weird that an assistant manager from management came out of the blue and asked Young-Joon, who was at a lab far away from the headquarters.

It wasn't about capability, but it was because management didn't usually do that, especially if they were only an assistant manager. He probably did it since Kim Hyun-Taek approved it, but Young-Joon was still suspicious of him. Personally, he predicted that the plan to destroy Cellicure started from Yoon Bo-Hyun or someone close to him.

“But can A-Gen shut down another company, no matter how strong they are?” Young-Joon asked.

“You're naive.” Song Ji-Hyun smiled bitterly.

“A-Gen is not just any pharmaceutical company. They have a close relationship with people in politics, press, and key institutions and huge pharmaceutical companies outside the country.”

“...”

“And since pharmaceutical companies have to close their doors if the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety doesn't approve, they are directly in the hands of politics.”

“No, but still... It's just so shocking. They're not gangsters, but how...”

“They are gangsters,” Song Ji-Hyun said, clenching her jaws.

“Even if they don't use the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, they could obstruct retailers, or cut off the supply of equipment and reagents we need to

develop new drugs. They said that there are a lot of things that A-Gen could do.”

“Oh my...”

“So, the contract for the ten billion won investment and transfer of the new drug ended with our CEO signing it. The investment itself wasn’t a small amount of money for a venture company, and we really thought that the company would grow with things like technological alliances and sharing of facilities since A-Gen was going to develop us. At the time, of course.”

Song Ji-Hyun added, “But we were wrong. Since then, they suddenly were giving us subcontracts related to new drug developments. It was basically grunt work.”

“Oh...”

“They weren’t supporting the research we were doing. They were giving us the difficult and hard things from things they were studying that weren’t important. To be honest, our company is basically an accessory of A-Gen right now.”

“Oh my god...”

Song Ji-Hyun sighed.

“Celligener is a really capable startup company. I’m not saying this because it’s our company, but there are a lot of key players from big companies or famous universities.”

“Of course. You wouldn’t have been able to make a new liver cancer drug if you didn’t have the skills to do it.”

“A-Gen wanted those human resources and the technology. A-Gen almost wanted to make Celligener into their seventh lab. They thought they could get a lot of output from here since there were a lot of skilled scientists.”

“So was that why you took off work? Because that situation took a toll on you?”

“Oh, we were talking about why I took off work, right?”

Song Ji-Hyun laughed.

“I didn’t take off work because it was hard on me. Everyone at Celligener is like family to me. I couldn’t just abandon them because it was hard.”

“Then...?”

“I wanted to expose the terrible things A-Gen did. Since I have a pharmacist license, I was going to try to use the power of the Pharmaceutical Association to keep them in check.”

“So were you able to?”

“No. All I found was that the A-Gen cartel was much bigger than I thought. I didn’t know it was that big at first, but A-Gen invests huge amounts of money to medical and pharmacy schools and hospitals in the country as donations.”

“Oh...”

“The association was full of A-Gen’s people as well. Now, you could say that Korea’s medical and pharmaceutical field is in the hands of A-Gen. I couldn’t do anything.”

“I see.”

Song Ji-Hyun sipped her sake with a depressed face.

“Then what are you going to do now?” Young-Joon asked.

“I have to return to work.”

Song Ji-Hyun let out a sigh.

“Actually, I go back to work next week. My aunt’s vacation ended, so I won’t be at the pharmacy if you come anyway.”

Young-Joon nodded dejectedly.

“Young-Joon.”

“Yes?”

“You work at A-Gen, right?”

Young-Joon was surprised.

“How did you know...?”

“Haha, I thought so. You talked about A-Gen and stuff when you bought your supplements,” Song Ji-Hyun said.

“And after I told you about how A-Gen stole our liver cancer drug, it seemed like you didn’t really want to tell me the name of your company.”

“... That’s right.”

“It’s okay. A-Gen is a huge company, and you’re part of the Stem Cells Department, right? You probably didn’t know that your management got rid of another company’s anticancer drug.”

Young-Joon felt his heart ache out of guilt.

“Actually...”

“Oh! And about our company’s probiotics... We made an important technology.”

“An important technology?”

“Probiotics are living bacteria, right? We have to coat them so that they can safely get to their destination safely without getting easily destroyed in the stomach, so we developed a coating technology based on Roche’s product. But it’s more advanced.”

“Are you allowed to tell me information like that?” Young-Joon asked.

“I told you because it’s you.”

“Pardon?”

“You told me your company secret in front of me to save my dog.”

‘Oh.’

Song Ji-Hyun was talking about how Young-Joon fed Cleo, an ointment for cuts, to Brownie to save her.

‘That’s not actually a company secret.’

From the perspective of Young-Joon who had Rosaline, that information about Cleo was as valuable as the information that this sukiyaki had two pieces of mushroom in it. It was just common and simple knowledge; to Young-Joon, it was as valuable as leaves on the floor.

“For some reason, I felt like I could tell you, and I wanted to. I wanted to level the magnitude of information.”

Song Ji-Hyun rested her elbow on the table and stared at Young-Joon with her chin resting on her hand.

“And it’s not really a problem since I didn’t tell you what that technology was specifically.”

She chuckled.

“Still, thanks for telling me. So, you have that kind of technology, right?”

“Yes. Although, I am worried that A-Gen will take it from us again...”

Young-Joon thought about the time he analyzed Roche’s probiotic product with Synchronization Mode. At the time, Rosaline showed him the most valuable bacteria strain that could be used, but she did not show anything about the capsule coating to send it to the intestines.

It could have been because Rosaline’s level was lower, or it could be because Rosaline’s analysis was limited to living things. The one thing for sure was that products that sent microbes to the intestines orally required not only an excellent strain of bacteria, but an advanced coating technology.

‘Wait. Couldn’t I incorporate the capsule coating that Celligener developed, which was better than Roche, with Chlorotonis limuvitus, the best microbe Rosaline presented?’

If Young-Joon dominated that market by commercializing an overwhelmingly efficient probiotic and gave Celligener the share they deserved through a technological alliance, it would be enough for them to escape A-Gen’s control.

The fact that their company ended up like that started with Young-Joon, did it not? Although he didn’t mean for it to happen, and there were other people actually responsible for this, he was carrying this with him.

“Why don’t you work with me?” Young-Joon asked.

“Probiotics and the Stem Cells Department?”

“The name of my department is the Life Creation Department.”

Song Ji-Hyun squinted. She thought, *‘What kind of name is that?’*

“What does your department do?” She asked.

“As the name states, we literally artificially synthesize life.”

“But you said you were working on stem cells.”

“That’s true; we are also doing stem cells. But now, we want to try probiotics.”

“Then are you working on a cure for AIDS or anticancer drugs?”

“We are considering it.”

Song Ji-Hyun was bewildered. She thought, *‘What kind of ridiculous place is this?’*

“You’re going to work in the food business in a few years then?” Song Ji-Hyun said jokingly.

“That’s a good idea, too. There will be a food shortage in the near future, and it is up to biologists like us to prepare for that and solve it. We don’t have to limit it to pharmaceuticals.”

“ ... ”

“Anyways, probiotics. If you’re interested, give me a call so that we can set up a meeting with the CEO of Celligener,” Young-Joon said.

“If you work with me, A-Gen won’t be able to interfere with your management anymore.”

* * *

Young-Joon took his experimental data and went to the management headquarters at A-Gen.

“Is Division Manager Ji Kwang-Man in? We were supposed to meet now.” Young-Joon asked Yoon Bo-Hyun when he ran into him in the management office.

Yoon Bo-Hyun frowned.

“Go inside.”

“Thank you,” Young-Joon replied.

After Young-Joon went inside, Yoon Bo-Hyun mumbled, “That TMJ asshole. Something feels off about him.”

“TMJ?” Lee Na-Rae, an employee sitting next to him asked.

“Too Much Justice... I came up with the name. Perfect, right?”

Lee Na-Rae laughed with her hand covering her mouth. But Yoon Bo-Hyun was still frowning.

“I don’t think we should let him become more powerful... We need to step on him once.”

Chapter 28: A Supernova In the Scientific Community (2)

“I created optic nerve cells with induced pluripotent stem cells and used them to treat retinal degenerative mice,” Young-Joon said to Ji Kwang-Man.

“There hasn’t been anything uploaded as a performance report,” Ji Kwang-Man said as he looked through Young-Joon’s data.

“Because I haven’t uploaded the draft yet.”

“Then why don’t you do that? Why did you come to me first and tell me this?”

“There is something I want to tell you in advance, Division Manager.”

Ji Kwang-Man rested his fat body on the back of the chair. He stared at Young-Joon with suspicion.

“What is it?”

“The fact that I have ninety percent of the royalties of iPSCs means that I have the key to all studies following it and whatever profits come from it.”

“So?”

“My studies are set to be published in *Science*. Not only the iPSCs, but the optic nerve cell treatment as well. People who don’t really know biology won’t really know what stem cells are, but they will be surprised if they hear that I will be able to open a blind man’s eyes.”

“ ... ”

“The situation has changed now. When the paper is published, it will not only be the scientific and medical community that will focus on me. Investors will be interested, and so will the shareholders of our company. They were usually more focused on profits and their portion than what kind of drugs were developed, but it will be different this time.”

“Hm.”

“And they will be displeased when they find out that just some lowly scientist has most of the royalties of iPSCs. They will also be shocked when they realize that they will not be given a single penny even after publishing a patent as big as this.”

Young-Joon added, “Since you are going to be the one approving my patent application request, you will also be held responsible.”

“So?”

“Why don’t you cooperate with me?”

Ji Kwang-Man silently glared at Young-Joon.

“I will sell a portion of the eighty percent of royalties dedicated to the Life Creation Department to the company. Then, you will be the best manager who got great results from encouraging a talented scientist while maximizing the shareholders’ profit.”

“How much do you want?”

“I don’t want money. I want shares of A-Gen.”

Ji Kwang-Man's eyes shook. He took a few sips of his hot tea and said, "How much?"

"You must give me one percent of the shares per five percent of the royalties of the original iPSC technology. How much will you buy?"

"You're crazy. You think I will make a deal like that?"

"Why can't you?"

"That eighty percent is part of the company fund. It is not your own money. The shareholders will be displeased, but it's essentially money that will be invested back into the company. All we have to do is give that profit to the shareholders."

"That is under the assumption that I will produce results with the eighty percent of royalties given to the department."

Ji Kwang-Man's eyes widened.

"... What are you talking about... You are A-Gen's employee! Are you saying that you will purposely slack off with your own mouth?"

"Who will be the one to decide whether I am slacking off or whether I'm not getting results even though I'm working hard?"

"What?"

"Is there anyone in the world who knows more about induced pluripotent stem cells, nerve differentiation, and nerve transplants than me?"

"..."

"And if I become one of the shareholders, will they really dislike that? My name value will be different once the special on my paper is released in *Science*. Giving me shares of A-Gen and inviting me to the executive's table will not be a harmful decision to you, Division Manager. It will help the development of the company, and the shareholders will like it. And if I give you some royalties, it's a win-win situation for both of us."

Ji Kwang-Man bit his lip.

Young-Joon added, "I will be generous. If you give me four percent of the company shares, I will give you thirty percent of the royalties. You can share that with the shareholders or do whatever you want with it."

"Four percent is almost as much as we give to lab directors. And four percent of shares in cash is trillions of won!"

"Considering the value of the patent, I am selling it to you at a very cheap price. I don't know if you will get a lot of money from this itself since it is a base technology, but the stem cell therapy market that will start from this will be worth trillions of won."

"No matter how expensive or cheap it is, do you think that I can just give you a share that big myself?"

"You have to come up with the how, Division Manager. Personally, I think it is a realistic amount."

"Can I assume that you are acting this way because you want to participate in the management of A-Gen?"

"Yes," Young-Joon answered firmly.

"I mistook you. I thought you had no interest in company politics and management. I thought all you wanted to do was study stem cells?"

"Research was everything to me. But the company used scientists' results on something different when I took no interest. I am not going to be used like that anymore."

"Stop."

Ji Kwang-Man waved his hand.

"Doctor Ryu. The contract you gave me. That's nothing but a piece of paper. I haven't signed that yet, and we could discuss this again and do it according to the law. Do you really want to do it that way?"

"That's unexpected. I trusted your word and completed differentiating stem cells into optic nerves and finished treating retinal degeneration in animal models, but you're not going to keep your promise?"

“I think I told you before, but I am a businessman. I only act based on gains and losses. In this case, I think it’s more beneficial for me to break my promise, have people say some things about me and be resented by you. I have no intentions of being swindled by you anymore. Go to Pfizer or don’t go. Do whatever you want.”

“Hm, I wonder. It won’t be easy for you to do that. I already said I was getting eighty percent.”

“To who?”

Knock knock knock.

“Division Manager, it’s Secretary Joo.”

Ji Kwang-Man’s secretary came inside.

“What is it? We’re in a meeting right now.”

“Um... Some reporter wants to do an interview.”

“A reporter?”

“A reporter from CNN.”

“CNN?”

Ji Kwang-Man tilted his head in confusion.

“Not SBS or KBS, but CNN? CNN from the US? All of a sudden? Who are they interviewing?”[1]

“You and Doctor Ryu Young-Joon.”

‘No.’

Ji Kwang-Man felt his heart drop and his breath stop. Something was wrong.

Young-Joon was clearing his throat right next to him.

“I didn’t know they would be here already. News travels really fast. The special from *Science* didn’t even go out yet...”

“What did you do?”

“I did an interview with the *Science* journal.”

“...What?”

“I only told the truth. And I only said things that were good for the company. I didn't say any bad things like how A-Gen stole a small company's liver cancer treatment and destroyed it, or made a principal scientist harvest spinach to get him to quit. Don't worry too much. All I did was talk about the promise you made me in a more humanistic way.”

Young-Joon smiled, which sent chills through Ji Kwang-Man's spine. He understood the situation right away.

Being in this business for over thirty years, Ji Kwang-Man had been through hell and fought all kinds of psychopaths and lunatics to get to where he was. But he had never felt this kind of fear from someone, not once. Young-Joon's smile looked like the devil's.

“The deal I offered you. Don't forget it. Four percent.”

* * *

Research papers that were published in *Science* had to be under four thousand five hundred characters, but the papers Young-Joon published were over ten thousand characters combined. Samuel, the editor-in-chief of *Science*

, ignored all the rules and published all of it. This paper was unique and the only one on its subject in the entire history of the *Science* journal. The number of characters wasn't a big deal.

Chuckling, Samuel read the abstract of the paper again.

[Although stem cells have a great potential to recover damaged nerves and organs, they are limited in that they require embryos. In this paper, we dedifferentiated regular somatic cells and transformed them into stem cells. Furthermore, we succeeded in differentiating those stem cells into cardiac muscle and optic nerve cells. With those optic nerve cells, we were able to inject them into the retinal area in mice with end-stage retinal degeneration and recover their vision.]

It was a very short and straightforward abstract that was only filled with explanations about the data. Each sentence was like an ax to the scientific community.

“You didn’t see this coming, did you, you *Nature* assholes? The top biology journal is *Science* from today onward.”

Samuel smiled in satisfaction as he uploaded the manuscript. He thought that there was no paper to match up to this one in all of *Science*’s history other than the paper on the Genome Project.

And there was something more important than this groundbreaking paper: the discovery of Doctor Ryu Young-Joon, a biologist. They said that he was a young man, only twenty-eight years old. He said that he was thirty in his country because Korea had this weird system where everyone became a year older when the year changed, but he was twenty-eight in America. Jamie Anderson, the person who discovered the structure of DNA, was an elite who graduated university at the age of sixteen and finished his doctorate at twenty-four, but Young-Joon was more than that.

‘What kind of things will this genius discover and create in the decades of research years he has left?’

Young-Joon said many things that would grab the attention of scientists and people in the medical and pharmaceutical industry around the world.

The best part about the interview was the last part of Jessie’s interview.

—Doctor Ryu, do you have plans for the optic nerve cells created from iPSCs to be used in clinical trials to treat actual patients?

Jessie asked.

“Of course. A-Gen will support our clinical trial. And we won’t stop there.”

—Then?

“Induced pluripotent stem cells have the potential to differentiate into any tissue or nerve. And we have the ability to make that possibility into reality.”

Young-Joon added, “In a few years, we will put an end to all neurological disorders such as Parkinson’s, spinal cord damages, strokes, epilepsy,

dementia, multiple sclerosis, Lou Gherig's disease, Refsum's disease, and more."

It wasn't put on the interview manuscript, but Jessie almost screamed when she heard him.

—Is... Is that possible?

"It will not take long. I will promise you right here. I am planning a major pharmaceutical project that will erase all kinds of neurological diseases. Like how no one suffers from smallpox in the twenty-first century, no neurological disorders will make anyone suffer in the future. Human medicine has already advanced to the next stage, and all humans have the right to not be in pain. They have the right to keep their bodies safe and be happy."

Young-Joon added, "What we are declaring war on are neurological disorders itself, and the first target among them are eye diseases. I promise you that in six months, we will perfect a technology that will be able to cure all patients who have optic nerve damage."

Jessie felt like she was suffocating; an emotion that she could not figure out filled her heart. She was someone who had finished her doctorate at MIT and had been a scientist. Research took years, and it was difficult, hard, and boring. magic

And one day, she gave up on research. Instead, she found interest in introducing things other scientists discovered. After she became an editor at *Science*, she did not once miss the life of a frontline scientist.

She was happy reading the newly published papers. Her intellectual thirst was quenched, and she took delight in watching knowledge that wasn't known to humanity before be discovered. That was the science Jessie was doing. As an editor, the science that she knew was the subject of admiration and entertainment. But today, she realized that science could be touching.

The future that Young-Joon was building was not a fascinating and fun future; he was not a scientist who found intellectual enhancement and entertainment in discovering beautiful and exhilarating truths and disseminating them to editors and the public. Young-Joon, a frontline scientist, was like a warrior in battle. The battlefield he was in was not about the discovery of new cutting-edge technology or new scientific knowledge but about destroying diseases.

Young-Joon was a soldier of science who was fighting on the frontlines of the oldest battle in humanity: the battle between humanity and disease. He knew that was his role, and he held to his values.

—Um... Is A-Gen funding the research?

Jessie asked.

“Of course. A-Gen is the best pharmaceutical company in the world. They give plenty of support to scientists as well. The shareholders didn’t even take the shares of the iPSC. It was solely to reinvest into research.”

—Really?

“Yes. If I succeed in this research, A-Gen has decided to give me ten percent of the royalties of the iPSCs, and they have agreed to leave eighty percent of the royalties for my department’s budget and give me final approval of the allocation. They were being considerate and letting me do all the research that I wanted to do.”

—Wow!

“They even left the remaining ten percent of royalties for the frontline scientists. The shareholders did not take even a little bit of the royalties.”

—Wow... Amazing. Do they have that much faith in you, Doctor Ryu?

“Not only that, they have high expectations for this research. That’s the kind of place A-Gen is. Instead of milking the results of research, they highly praise the frontline researchers and support them to encourage them to complete their follow-up research.”

—Incredible. Your competitor companies like Pfizer and Conson & Colson must be both worried and nervous.

“They do not have to be.”

—Why is that?

“They could have people close to them who are suffering from severe neurological disorders, or have family members suffer because of it. Patients are not separate people from us; everyone can be in an accident and become paralyzed from the waist down. It doesn’t matter whether I develop it, or Pfizer

or Roche. All we have to be able to do is give hope to these patients. Scientists should not chase after money or prestige, but pursue the convenience and welfare of humanity.”

—I see. Does the management of A-Gen think so as well?

“They will, since they gave up all the shares that would normally go to the shareholders and fully supported me and other fellow scientists.”

1. SBS and KBS are national broadcasting networks in Korea. ?

Chapter 29: A Supernova In the Scientific Community (3)

The reporter from CNN who came to see Young-Joon after hearing the leaked information from *Science* asked him similar questions to Jessie.

And the reporter asked Ji Kwang-Man all the difficult questions.

“It probably wasn’t an easy decision for the company to give their full support by awarding one outstanding scientist ninety percent of the patent shares.”

“ ... ”

Ji Kwang-Man was pale.

“I can only think that like Doctor Ryu Young-Joon, A-Gen’s management has the same values: to cure all diseases as a true pharmaceutical company.”

“Yes...”

“I think that the *Science*’s special on the paper and Doctor Ryu’s interview will be released in a few days. I think our interview will be released together as the main news for that CNN broadcast. We requested this interview because Doctor Ryu Young-Joon mentioned in his interview with *Science* that you were the one who made the decision regarding the patent shares, Mr. Division Manager. Could I have a comment?”

“ ... ”

“Sir?”

“Y...es, that’s right. I divided the shares as such. Because the goal of A-Gen is not to earn profit... but to destroy diseases,” Ji Kwang-Man said with his fists clenched and trembling in anger.

‘Four percent! This crazy bastard. I’ve gone through hell with the CEO to be where I am right now, and I only have three percent.’

Ji Kwang-Man thought this greenhorn scientist was just some boring bookworm who was only interested in papers, but he was a player. This guy was dangerous. If Young-Joon was left unchecked, he would climb to the top to claim the management of the company as a whole, and Ji Kwang-Man did not want to admit it, but Young-Joon had enough power to do so. He was smart, acted fast, and had the boldness of a CEO of a venture company. The biggest problem was that he was capable enough to research everything there was to know about that stupid induced stem cell technology or whatever and turn the entire pharmaceutical and medical industry upside down.

A-Gen was a lab-centered company. Sometimes, they played politics, such as buying competitive drugs from venture companies to destroy them or becoming the owner of small venture companies by controlling their stocks, but even so, the company was based on drug research; a thousand scientists were supporting this company. What this meant was that Young-Joon was like a fish in the water. More specifically, A-Gen was like a huge sea, and he was like a megalodon: someone who could destroy the whole ecosystem.

‘All this time, I thought he was just a fat tuna with a lot to eat...’

If someone like Young-Joon obtained as much company stock as a lab director, every one of his words would have a huge impact on the company. First of all, if a low-level scientist suddenly rose to the position of a major shareholder in the company, the scientists would be swayed, and he would become a star amongst them.

People became jealous if someone they were similar to succeeded, but they admired them if they achieved unimaginably great success. It was possible that he could temporarily gain more support and respect than Kim Hyun-Taek, the next CTO.

‘Sigh...’

Ji Kwang-Man sighed in his head and continued the interview. He wasn’t getting anything the reporter was saying; all he was doing was glossing over

the subject and agreeing with them that A-Gen was a good company. What he was actually doing was thinking about the solution to this situation.

But as time passed, he was no longer hitting the roof in anger. He was calm, and he was logical again.

'Wait. Now that I think of it, I'm not really backed up into a corner. The situation could actually become better if I use this situation to my advantage, right? I can just make Ryu Young-Joon one of ours.'

Just like how Yoon Bo-Hyun nicknamed him TMJ, it would be difficult to bring him in since he was so focused on ethics, but Ji Kwang-Man thought that was just because he was young.

'I can make him rot a little and turn him into an ally, right? Who in the world doesn't turn when they get money and power?'

Yoon Dae-Sung, the current CEO of A-Gen, was brought to mind. He was the founder's son, and he had built this company along with his father. His family owned fourteen percent of the company shares and was basically the largest shareholder. Also, Yoon Dae-Sung and Ji Kwang-Man were close enough to be brothers and had been business partners for a long time. If he brought Young-Joon into this group, no one would be able to touch them.

On the way back to his office after the interview, Ji Kwang-Man called CEO Yoon Dae-Sung.

"Sir, it's me."

—Yes, Mr. Division Manager. Have you eaten?

The CEO laughed heartily as he did not know about the things that were happening under him yet.

"Sir, do you remember the person who received a standing ovation from the CTO during the last seminar?"

—Of course. Doctor Ryu Young-Joon, was it? The one that made induced pluripotent stem cells.

"I have some things to talk about regarding him. Could we meet right now for a bit? I will come to you."

Ji Kwang-Man was walking, but suddenly paused.

“Oh, sorry. I will call you back in a minute.”

He saw Yoon Bo-Hyun standing outside his office.

“Mr. Division Manager, I have something I would like to discuss,” Yoon Bo-Hyun said.

“Come in.”

Ji Kwang-Man opened the door and walked in. He opened the refrigerator and handed Yoon Bo-Hyun a beverage.

Yoon Bo-Hyun opened the bottle and sat comfortably in the chair. He crossed his legs and stared at Ji Kwang-Man.

“What did you talk about with Ryu Young-Joon? CNN suddenly came here, and you even did an interview, right?” Yoon Bo-Hyun asked.

“He said that he successfully turned iPSCs into optic nerves. And he said that he did an interview with *Science* as he announced his paper and talked about the patent royalties as if they had been confirmed.”

“Did he put the nail in the coffin so that you couldn’t go back on your word?”

“...”

“You made a mistake.”

“I agree. I thought he had no interest in power, and even if he did, I thought that I would be able to crush him easily.”

“I knew from the start that Ryu Young-Joon was that kind of person. I warned you many times, right? I told you he was dangerous.”

Ji Kwang-Man nodded.

“Mr. Division Manager—no, Uncle Kwang-Man.”

“Manager Yoon. Be careful at the company. You’re not trying to spread the word, are you?”

“I’m saying this not as the manager of A-Gen management or as the heir getting management lessons, but because we are close.”

“ ... ”

“Are you perhaps thinking of turning him into an ally by including him in your group or something?”

“Um...”

Ji Kwang-Man thought for a bit.

“I only asked because I was worried, but I guess it was true. Uncle, don’t overdo it. You won’t be able to handle Ryu Young-Joon. To be honest, there’s some dirty corruption in our company, right?”

“ ... ”

“Knowing his personality, he will blow up the company if he finds out about even one of them. He has Reset Syndrome. The company will explode. We cannot let him become a part of our management.”[1]

“...*Sigh*. What do you want to do?”

“I think that we should step on him before he gets bigger. This is the maginot line.”

“Do you have a way?” Ji Kwang-Man asked.

“We have to go strong. First of all, let’s rip up that shitty patent application request and contract. And give him something so that he cooperates.”

“But if we do that, we’ll become a national embarrassment after the *Science* publication and the CNN news broadcast. Do you think we could handle that kind of smearing on our image? We will look like an insane company that is obstructing the future of a genius scientist who is saying that he could cure all neurological disorders. And we’re basically giving a new pharmaceutical market worth trillions of won to America.”

“Do you think that bastard will really leave? Did he say that he was going to go to Pfizer or Roche? It’s all bullshit. Immigration isn’t that easy. He completed elementary, junior, and high school here. He also got his bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate in Korea. He’s Korean inside out. Throwing away his home that

he's lived in all his life and going to another country? It's not that easy. If we crush his spirits a little, spoil him with money and a promotion and swindle him, he'll stay."

"..."

"Don't get scared and be strong. You're not acting like yourself, Uncle."

"Sigh... Bo-Hyun... Never mind. We can't do that. I know that you learned a lot from CEO Yoon ever since you were little, but you are seriously mistaken. We can't poke Ryu Young-Joon like that."

"Ah. Seriously! Stop being so frustrating. All he is is a scientist, an assistant manager at best. How can we not handle someone like him? How can we be swayed by him and lose?"

"That guy made iPSCs in a couple of months, differentiated it into optic nerve cells and cured blind mice with it."

Ji Kwang-Man added, "That is enough for him to bet on his talent and just ask for four percent of company stocks. He didn't have to make a deal with the royalties of his patent. If he threw a tantrum and said he was going to Pfizer if they didn't give him stocks, smart people like the CEO or Nicholas would just give it to him and let him be an executive."

"What are you talking about! That's ridiculous. All of you are overestimating Ryu Young-Joon," Yoon Bo-Hyun replied. "Of course, I acknowledge the significance of his results. He was so lucky that he would've hit the jackpot if he lived in the US, but that's all. Unless he has an alien locked up in his house and he's torturing it, there is no way he's going to succeed in everything he does. There were a lot of one-hit wonders in this field, right? And they all disappeared quickly."

"That's the scary part!" Ji Kwang-Man shouted.

"There are definitely going to be shareholders that will think of him like that. They are going to think that he's just going to be a one-hit wonder, or they're going to wonder why we gave a mere scientist four percent. They're going to ask if that thirty-year-old scientist is on the same level as Lab Director Kim Hyun-Taek since he also has four percent. They are going to be angry!"

"What?"

“If that happens, he might not be able to get his shares. That’s why he is making sure by giving me thirty percent of the royalties of the induced pluripotent stem cells! He’s basically telling me to give the shareholders the royalties and convince them!”

Ji Kwang-Man wiped off the cold sweat from his forehead.

“He blocked my escape route with the interview with *Science* and made it so that everything went just how he wanted. He was making sure he would get the right to participate in the company’s management!”

“ ... ”

Ji Kwang-Man’s hands trembled.

“And how would the directors who got the shares feel? They might not like Ryu Young-Joon, but they will want to keep an eye on him. Then, from that point on, there will be people who like him among the board of directors.”

“Hm...”

“He’s insane. That portion of the royalties isn’t even his, but already part of the company. But he’s selling it to the company directors like it’s already his, and getting a seat at the management table while also getting stocks worth trillions of won for that? Is he Kim Sun-Dal selling water from the Taedong River or something...”[2]

Yoon Bo-Hyun scratched his head.

Ji Kwang-Man said, “He’s not just some talented and confident kid. Ryu Young-Joon knows exactly how much value he has, and he is only acting in ways that match that. You want me to have some guts and tell him to go to Pfizer if he wants? He’ll actually go. Honestly, what’s he got to lose?”

“But still...”

“I am also telling you this as your father’s friend who has known you for a long time, but be careful with Ryu Young-Joon. He’s like a landmine, so it will be your foot that flies off if you step on him the wrong way. If you want to inherit the business safely, you have to make him your ally. Leave it to me.”

“But we can’t let him into the board of directors. We have some corruption in our company, right? Some of them aren’t even comparable to the liver cancer drug from Celligener, and if he finds out...”

“Don’t worry about that part either. I will discuss it with the CEO and get it taken care of. You, don’t worry about it anymore.”

* * *

There was an emergency board meeting. It was just before the publishing of Young-Joon’s paper and special in *Science*, and the release of the interview. Considering the time zone difference, a bunch of news and articles would come up on Friday morning. On top of that, A-Gen’s stock prices would skyrocket.

But before that, they would have to decide what to do with this matter. Since the situation was so urgent, management had informed the board of the meeting the day before and asked for their attendance. Still, most of the board directors had taken their seats, but the atmosphere was a little unsettled.

“Four percent... It’s too much for an individual to have. That’s the same amount that Director Kim has, right?”

“We cannot give four percent of the company stocks to an unverified kid like that. We don’t even know who he’s associated with...”

“If we give him that, we will also have to give him an executive position. We’re going to have to hold a temporary general board meeting. COO Son, what are your thoughts?” Oh Jun-Tae asked.

After pondering for a brief moment, a frown appeared on COO Son Jin-Gap's face and he answered, “If we assume that everything that Doctor Ryu Young-Joon does goes well, all of our stocks will skyrocket. If he is able to cure all those neurological disorders, the company could be a lot bigger. If we consider that merit, it could be a big mistake to refuse just because we cheap out on four percent.” magic

“Ha, I can’t believe this. I only have two percent,” Goh Yoo-Sung mumbled in irritation.

“Lab Director Gil Hyung-Joon has one percent, right? Haha, someone who was just a scientist suddenly is worth four times more than his own lab

director. He's not just getting a seat at the table, now you basically have to serve him."

Gil Hyung-Joon had his eyes closed as if he was in pain.

'I told this idiot Ji Kwang-Man to get ahold of Ryu Young-Joon, but he's the one who got crushed. Four percent? Four percent? A thirty-year-old rookie is going to take stocks worth trillions of won alone? This bastard is out of his mind!'

Four percent was how much Lab Director Kim Hyun-Taek had, and he was the one who did all the hard work with CEO Yoon Dae-Sung and built the business back when it was just a mid-sized company. The only individuals who had more stocks than him were COO Son Jin-Gap, CTO Nicholas Kim, and CEO Yoon Dae-Sung.

"Let's give it to him," Nicholas said without hesitation. "Like the COO said, all of our stocks will rise if Doctor Ryu really succeeds. And as the chief technology officer of A-Gen, I am confident he will."

"But still, four percent is..."

"Our company has about twelve percent of treasury stocks, right? Give him four percent from there. Doctor Ryu is a scientist valuable enough for that. Everyone, don't think of him just as a worker or employee of this company; we have to think of him as the elite who will win the bread for our company," Nicholas said firmly.

1. Reset Syndrome is when an individual believes that they could reset their life and what they've done in real life like they could do in games or on a computer. ?

2. Kim Sun-Dal is a famous fraud that lived during the Chosun time period. His most famous fraudulent act was lying to merchants that he owned the Taedong River, which was an important water source for people as there were no wells in Chosun, and selling it off to them for a large sum of money. ?

Chapter 30: A Supernova In the Scientific Community (4)

"I am not against giving him stocks," Kim Hyun-Taek said.

The attention of all the board members was drawn to him. Kim Hyun-Taek looked calm, but he had a lot of mixed feelings.

“Considering the performance Doctor Ryu showed, he will make the entire pie bigger if he becomes a major shareholder and executive.”

COO Son Jin-Gap added, “Director Kim is right. If the interview is released along with what he has shown thus far, the stocks of the company will rise. But if it becomes known that he has become a company executive and a major shareholder with four percent of the shares? If we say that we are promoting a scientist into an executive by giving them a huge portion of the company stocks and are extensively supporting him? Depending on how we play this, the increase in our stocks could be much more than four percent.”

“Then is Doctor Ryu joining the board from now on?” Kim Hyun-Taek asked.

There was a moment of silence.

“Doctor Ryu is too dangerous to let into management. His ideology is a little different from ours, and honestly, that part worries me.”

“Let’s give him the shares and put him as an unregistered director. Use that to stop him from coming onto the board of directors,” Ji Kwang-Man said.

All eyes were drawn to Ji Kwang-Man this time.

“Wait, Division Manager. Do you think he’s going to be an unregistered director when he has as many shares as Director Kim?” Go Yoo-Sung asked like he was bewildered.

“We have to gloss over it and convince him. We can go with something like because it’s a unique circumstance, we won’t be able to give him a vote on the board of directors since he is still young and inexperienced, but it’s okay since he gets this much stock and has that much power amongst the shareholders,” Ji Kwang-Man answered.

“Do you think that clever bastard will accept it? What if he makes a fuss about joining the board too? From what I saw, he’s like a beagle that chews through anything until it becomes a rag when it sees something that it doesn’t like,” Gil Hyung-Joon said with a frown.

“The only condition he gave me was just the four percent of stock for now. If we give him that, he won’t be able to say anything, right? He’s not going to go that overboard.”

“Hm...”

The directors were lost in thought.

“He definitely has to be a registered director if he is going to hold four percent,” Kim Young-Hoon said. Ji Kwang-Man glanced at him with a gulp.

Kim Young-Hoon was one of the people that the SG group had put on the board.

The largest shareholder of A-Gen was Yoon Dae-Sung’s family. Himself, his wife, his son Yoon Bo-Hyun, and his older brother Yoon Dae-Pyung had fourteen percent combined. The entirety of the fourteen percent distributed amongst them was actually being used in whatever way Yoon Dae-Sung wanted. And Ji Kwang-Man and Son Jin-Gap, who were both close friends with him, had shares as friendly shares.

Although it seemed like things between Nicholas Kim and Yoon Dae-Sung had become a little awkward, they still had a link as they attended the same school, and the lab directors still followed Yoon Dae-Sung. Their shares were quite strong in defending the management rights.

But there were other forces in the company as well. Aside from the National Pension Service, which had eleven percent, SG, a Korean company, had six percent. It was because A-Gen had gotten investments from them when they had no money when they first started out. For the same reason, Berkshire, a foreign investment company, had eight percent, which they had acquired when A-Gen was building a few labs outside the country. Conson & Colson, who was interested in A-Gen since they were a small pharmaceutical company, had four percent as well. The combined shares of the three exceeded the Yoon Dae-Sung family’s.

There hadn’t been much contact between them yet, and there weren’t any problems since Yoon Dae-Sung had a lot of friendly shares. Furthermore, the main task of SG Electronics, the core of the SG group, was to make semiconductors. Even if they expanded their subsidiaries and dabbled in a few different businesses, they did not know enough about this field to interfere with A-Gen’s management.

But since a huge potential value of A-Gen was revealed along with the appearance of Young-Joon, no one knew how the situation would unfold from here on.

'Ji Kwang-Man, this bastard is trying to take him out of the board and work him.' Kim Young-Hoon thought as he stared at Ji Kwang-Man. Outside directors like Kim Young-Hoon, Berkshire, and Conson & Colson had relatively less contact with Young-Joon. If he wasn't part of the board, it became that much harder to form a connection with him.

'That can't happen. We have to make Ryu Young Joon the card to keep the Yoon family in check.'

"Didn't you make the treasury stocks for the succession of management rights?" Alex asked. He was someone from Berkshire.

"I'm worried if it will be okay to just give it out like that."

"It should be fine," Yoon Dae-Sung replied.

"If you're going to give him shares, give him the right to attend board meetings. It does not make sense for him to not have a vote in board meetings when he has four percent," Kim Young-Hoon said.

"But don't we have some problems in our company?" Ji Kwang-Man asked.

"If we let Doctor Ryu Young-Joon have a seat at board meetings, we don't know what he will do when he finds out. He is no joke."

"He may find out someday if we give him four percent and let him be a director. We can buy some time before he finds out if we don't give him a seat in board meetings, but can that change his personality, too?"

"Doctor Ryu said that he will give us some of his patent royalties." magic

The directors suddenly changed.

"What are you talking about now?" Gil Hyung-Joon asked.

"He took ninety percent of the royalties after complaining that he can't give any to anyone who didn't participate in the experiment, but he's giving it to us again? Does he have multiple personalities or something?"

“He’s asking us to use it to get his shares from the board of directors. It’s proof that Doctor Ryu is also learning company politics. He’s smart, so he will learn quickly.”

“So, Mr. Division Manager, what you are saying is that he will be able to think from the perspective of management with time?” Kim Hyun-Taek asked.

“That’s right,” Ji Kwang-Man replied.

“Let’s take a break and gather again. I’m a little tired,” Kim Young-Hoon said.

* * *

It was a Friday. During their lunch break, Young-Joon and the Life Creation Department received everyone’s attention as they stood in line in the company cafeteria.

“It wasn’t this bad even when we got the award at the seminar,” Cheon Ji-Myung said awkwardly.

The reason everyone was like this was because of the publishing of the paper in *Science*. A huge ten thousand character paper was put on the front page. It was going to be a masterpiece that would be looked back on several times in the medical community and would boast a legendary citation index.

After the paper, there was a special on Young-Joon and his interview.

[The pioneer who is spearheading a new trend in medicine: Ryu Young-Joon, Ph.D]

In the eyes of a scientist, the paper itself was extremely shocking, but his declaration in his interview made their heads ache.

‘We will put an end to all neurological disorders.’

‘In a few years.’

In the past, any scientist would have been laughed at and called a lunatic if they said things like that, but Young-Joon had shown that he had the ability to make that happen.

All scientists read scientific papers. Like the fathers in the nineties who read the daily newspaper that was delivered to their doorstep, they all put the main

article of *Science* on their front screens on Friday. This morning, they had all read Young-Joon's paper and interview. And since news travels fast, everyone was already talking about how he was an executive and had four percent of shares.

"Um, you're Doctor Ryu Young-Joon, right?"

A scientist in his fifties approached Young-Joon.

"Yes, I am."

"I am Ha Hun-Wook, the department head of the Nerve Research Department. I read your paper, and it was interesting."

He reached out and shook hands with Young-Joon.

"Would you consider working with us when you start clinical trials for the optic nerves?" He asked.

"Our department has been studying peripheral nerve regeneration for a long time, and we have a lot of hospital contacts as well. We also have experience in clinical trials as well. If you're okay with it, we'd like to join you in your clinical trials and use stem cell technology to treat glaucoma patients or retinal degenerative patients who have dysfunctional optic nerves. We will be a lot of help to each other."

Ha Hun-Wook handed Young-Joon his business card.

"Please give me a call if you are interested."

"Yes, thank you."

Young-Joon took the business card and put it into his pocket. After Ha Hun-Wook, a bunch of scientists began crowding in front of him as if Ha Hun-Wook had started this.

"Doctor Ryu, are you also thinking of growing organ tissue with induced pluripotent stem cells?"

"You're going to focus on spinal nerves after optic nerves, right?"

"If you focus on brain diseases, you will have to work with the medical imaging team. Our department..."

“ ... ”

Young-Joon received seven business cards even before he got his meal ticket. What was even more surprising was that they were all business cards from people who were heads of their departments.

“Wait, why do you have seven cards when Lab Six only has four departments? What lab are they from?” Park Dong-Hyun said in bewilderment.

“But is that true?” Jung Hae-Rim asked Young-Joon.

“What is?”

“That you’re becoming an executive.”

“Hm.”

Young-Joon nodded his head.

“It’s true.”

“Holy.”

“Oh my god...”

Park Dong-Hyun and Jung Hae-Rim’s jaws dropped to the floor.

“Oh, Director Ryu. You came all the way down here to this humble cafeteria. We should have known in advance and brought you to a luxurious place. We are so sorry...” Cheon Ji-Myung started joking around but was swiftly interrupted.

“Eek. Stop it,” Young-Joon stopped him as if it was burdening.

“Um, you’re Doctor Ryu Young-Joon, right?”

Three young people who looked very smart came and talked to Young-Joon.

“Yes, I am.” When Young-Joon replied, the three of them hesitated a little.

“Are you going to propose a project?” Park Dong-Hyun asked.

“No. Um, we work at the Research Support Department of Lab Six. We were wondering if we could get your business card?”

“My business card?”

‘Why does the Research Support Department want my card?’

In puzzlement, Young-Joon pulled out some business cards from his coat and gave it to them. As he did, one of them handed him a pen.

“Could I get an autograph on that as well?”

“...”

“Doctor Ryu, you’re already a celebrity,” Bae Sun-Mi said.

“He’s going to get the Nobel Prize in ten to fifteen years,” The employees said as they got Young-Joon’s signed business card.

“We do science, but we can’t propose a project since we’re not scientists. But we wanted to get something like this since you’re a big star that will be long remembered in the history of science in Korea.”

“We’re cheering for you. Go Doctor Ryu!”

“Please become an executive, and I hope you’ll come to Lab Six as the lab director!”

The three of them said goodbye several times and left, giggling.

Watching them walk away, Park Dong-Hyun said, “Doctor Ryu, do you want to take some pictures? Exchange some used things. Socks you wore... or I’m wearing Guess underwear...”

“What are you talking about!” Young-Joon shouted in disgust.

“But Doctor Ryu’s reputation has definitely gone up a lot. How many project proposals have you gotten today...” Cheon Ji-Myung said.

“What are you going to do next, Doctor Ryu?” Jung Hae-Rim asked.

“Well, I am going to start clinical trials with optic nerves,” Young-Joon replied.

“What’s the next experiment with induced pluripotent stem cells?”

“I’m not getting into that right away. I’m going to decide on a target later on.”

“So are you just going to do the clinical trials?” Cheon Ji-Myung asked.

“No, I’m going to do probiotics. We have to beat everyone to it since it’s an important future market,” Young-Joon replied.

The Health Food Department of Lab Six had the best facilities and technicians to study probiotics, and they were linked to A-Gen’s giant probiotics production complex. Young-Joon was going to borrow their infrastructure.

And Celligener had a new coating technology for developed strains. He was going to collaborate with Celligener and borrow it.

Finally, he had the magic strain that Rosaline picked out for him, *Clorotonis limuvitus*. It was one of the types of bacteria that Young-Joon discovered when he gained insight into the probiotics from Roche Song Ji-Hyun gave him at the pharmacy.

The combination of the three would make a powerful item. They were going to each get a huge amount, even considering that one venture company and two departments were going to work together and split the performance. There was a high chance that they would have a monopoly in the probiotics department.

There was a reason why that was important.

The human body was made of approximately thirty-seven trillion cells, and all those cells were the person’s. It was part of themselves, something they had created by steadily dividing from an embryo in their mother’s stomach.

But actually, there was a huge number of immigrants living in this enormous biological republic: microorganisms that lived in symbiosis with the human body, like lactobacilli in the gut.

How many of them were living in one person’s body? Every paper had a different number, but the paper that was on the low end of the estimate predicted thirty-nine trillion microorganisms. The paper that was on the high end of the estimate? There were papers that thought there were ten times

more microorganisms than human cells. Whether it be the former or the latter, it was embarrassing to claim that the body was human.

It was unbelievable, but most biologists in the past almost ignored the huge number of bacteria living in the body.

But as more research is done on microorganisms, more shocking facts are discovered. microorganisms that live in symbiosis with the human body could make a person's skin smooth or keep them skinny. Conversely, if someone had more harmful microorganisms, they could get bad skin or become obese. It seemed unbelievable, but it was true.

Furthermore, those microorganisms controlled a person's immune response, affected their mood, and played an important role in determining someone's biological age. Scientists would be able to tell how old a person is with an error range of plus or minus two just by their gut bacteria composition.

It was the biggest buzzword of healthcare in the twenty-first century. Probiotics: the item that the pharmaceutical industry was paying huge attention to.

The next step of the genius who shook the scientific community with stem cells and optic nerves was going to be on the microorganisms market, something much different from before.