

I Became a Villainous Character with a Limited Lifespan - Episode 111 - 120

Episode 111

It was a face that looked a little startled, unlike usual for Seok-hyung. He tightened the scarf that had been wrapped loosely again and pulled the wheelchair back to the hospital room in a bit of a hurry.

The wheelchair that had been moving smoothly with his rushed footsteps swayed greatly and clattered. Seok-hyung, who had been worrying about Seung-hyun even with the brushing wind, was just moving his feet quickly without noticing, perhaps because he was startled.

He was curious why he was suddenly acting like that, but not enough to ask. Without saying a word, Seung-hyun just sat quietly in the wheelchair Seok-hyung was pulling and waited to arrive at the hospital room.

“...I was complacent.”

Right after returning to the hospital room, Seok-hyung sighed and slightly frowned. Since his face didn't show much expression, it was the first time seeing him make such a face.

“It's not that I don't know quite a lot of people recognize the director's face, but to make such a basic mistake...”

Seung-hyun easily figured out the reason Seok-hyung was startled. It seemed someone had recognized Seung-hyun's face. Although he didn't know in detail what repercussions the sight of Seung-hyun in a hospital gown and wheelchair would cause, it was sure to become bothersome.

“...I didn't want it to be known.”

Knowing how fast rumors spread and what kind of impact it would have if Seung-hyun's whereabouts were known, why had he overlooked this?

Seok-hyung clenched his fist tightly, blaming himself. Seeing that, Seung-hyun slowly said,

“It will be difficult to stay quietly now.”

“I apologize. I will do my best to have you discharged as soon as possible.”

Seok-hyung apologized, bowing his head deeply. He had thought this was the safest place to stably rest, but if his location was known, it was only a matter of time before Seung-hyun’s situation was revealed.

‘Director Han hated showing a weak appearance more than death.’

Although he had a face that looked like he didn’t care what happened now, the Seung-hyun that Seok-hyung knew was different. Even without considering Seung-hyun’s will, Seok-hyung also didn’t want to let others know of Seung-hyun’s weak appearance.

So the current situation was definitely bad news. Moreover, today wasn’t the first time they went for a walk. Yesterday, they went out without covering his face at all, so his location might have already been known.

“How bothersome.”

“...Don’t take it lightly. Once it becomes known that Director Han is in the hospital, all kinds of hyenas will tear apart the director’s illness.”

“.....”

“Even people who only knew of the director’s existence will talk as if they know the director well.”

Seung-hyun, who had been listening indifferently, suddenly froze at a thought that came to mind. If everyone found out about his condition, even if the exact illness wasn’t known, if it became known that his situation wasn’t good...

‘Will that person also find out?’

Then would Jae-young also find out about his condition? For the first time in a while, an expression appeared on Seung-hyun’s face.

“If that’s the case...”

“...I hate it.”

Just imagining it was horrible. He didn’t want it to be known in this way. A completely ended relationship. A body that was precariously holding on as if it would collapse at any moment.

When the only lingering attachment in the life he had barely forgotten came to mind, he felt a little terrible. Seung-hyun shook his head.

“I hate that.”

“...We will have to move your location to a place where others can't easily approach. Now that your location is known, this place is no longer safe.”

Seok-hyung said he would talk to Professor Kim, the attending physician, and left the hospital room. Left alone, Seung-hyun was lost in thought for a moment.

If it became known that he was here, how long would it take for that rumor to reach Jae-young? How would Jae-young react to that news?

If he acted like it was nothing, it would mean he had completely erased Seung-hyun from his life, so it would be a good thing, but honestly, it didn't seem like he would be happy.

On the other hand, what if he cared about that news and looked for Seung-hyun again? It would be better if it was after he died, when there would no longer be a way to meet or even a small spark to think of hope. But if it was now when they could still meet, Jae-young was a warm person, so he might want to see Seung-hyun.

Perhaps, even though it was Seung-hyun who spit out harsh words and pushed him away, he might apologize instead. He might approach again as if he had never been hurt.

Ironically, it didn't seem like he would be happy even if he did that. To Seung-hyun, Jae-young was a lingering attachment. A lingering attachment that made Seung-hyun, who wouldn't care even if the world ended today, think about tomorrow, the future, and what-ifs.

‘It's better not to meet.’

He couldn't be sure himself how he would react the moment he saw his face. Seung-hyun began biting his nails.

This time, he would have to go to a place where no one could find him, a place where even if they tried to find him, they couldn't enter. Even if he suddenly had a seizure and died like the Seung-hyun in the original work, a

space that was so secluded and private that no one would notice seemed good.

“Discharge isn’t impossible, but...”

Professor Kim, who came after receiving an urgent call, said while gauging the two’s reactions. He was just startled because they demanded discharge without even explaining the reason.

‘It’s not impossible, but... Secretary Lee, didn’t you care too much about Director Han’s health?’

“It would be better to stay at the hospital to handle unexpected situations.”

“...We ran into someone we know on the walking trail. Since they have a loose tongue, the fact that the director is here will probably spread in no time.”

“Ah...”

It was a vague explanation, but there was no difficulty understanding the situation. After thinking for a moment, Professor Kim nodded.

“...I understand. Then I will do an overall examination, and if there are no major issues, I will arrange for you to be discharged.”

With Professor Kim’s permission, it was decided to be discharged after undergoing examinations over two days. It was following the opinion that it would be best to check thoroughly and leave safely.

Seok-hyung also immediately agreed, saying it would be good to allow that much time since it would take time to find a new residence.

‘Even if his condition is good...’

It seemed like a meaningless thing, but he didn’t care either way. Seung-hyun, who finished the simple tests first, went to bed a little early.

However, unlike usual when he would fall asleep as soon as he closed his eyes as if he were hibernating, today he couldn’t fall asleep easily. In two days, he would leave this place and go to a place no one knew again.

Would Jae-young find him before that? Or would he escape faster? He couldn’t tell which one he wanted himself.

But one thing was certain. Jae-young's face, which he thought of for the first time in a long time, was so vivid that he missed him even more.

He didn't want to show his own appearance, but he wanted to see Jae-young's face even once if possible. But since that couldn't happen, Seung-hyun tried hard to shake off thoughts of Jae-young and had difficulty falling asleep.

"I will handle the remaining work, so you can leave now. Unless there are any changes, patient Han Seung-hyun will be discharged the day after tomorrow, so keep that in mind."

"Yes, Professor."

"See you tomorrow."

After sending everyone off work, Professor Kim sat in front of the monitor and quietly stared at the screen. It was a window showing the results of the tests Seung-hyun did today.

His condition couldn't even be falsely called good, but there was no separate treatment that could be done anyway. All that could be done was to check if it was to the extent that a seizure wouldn't occur right away, how fast the progression had become, and to what extent the situation could be suppressed with painkillers, so most moved on to the next screen before long.

As he was examining the results one by one like that, Professor Kim paused on one screen.

"Hmm..."

It was no exaggeration to say that all tests that existed in preparation for an emergency were done. Among them were tests that didn't need to be done and were unrelated to Seung-hyun.

It was a test done simply because of the small possibility that the cause of the recent pheromone rampage might exist in a different part than the existing one, in addition to the pheromone levels being so poor. He thought he could pass over it without any abnormalities, but a clear sense of discomfort was felt from the image.

It was strange. He had thought the bizarre pheromone levels were just due to the broken pheromone glands, but perhaps that wasn't the case.

“.....”

If the results he was looking at weren't wrong, it was amazing that Seung-hyun, who had experienced a rare case that was difficult to encounter even once in a lifetime, experienced it twice. It wasn't a common case to have such an illness at a young age, and if these results weren't wrong, this was an even rarer case.

“I'll have to talk to the secretary when he comes. No, before that, I should test again...”

He couldn't tell the person involved. Delivering this news to Seung-hyun, whose health was already poor, could lead to something bad happening due to excessive shock.

Although he hoped it wasn't the case, no matter how many times he looked, only the same screen appeared. Something that was difficult to find in the black and white image but could be clearly seen was filling Professor Kim's monitor screen.

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“I can't say it's good, but... since it's not for the purpose of treatment, I think discharge is possible.”

Two days later, Professor Kim, who had checked all the test results, allowed Seung-hyun's discharge. As Seok-hyung was about to bow his head and leave the doctor's office, Professor Kim stopped him.

“One moment, I have something to tell you, Secretary.”

“...Is it important?”

“Yes. It's something I should only tell you, so if Director could go back to the hospital room first...”

Seok-hyung looked at Professor Kim with a displeased expression. He didn't seem to feel at ease sending Seung-hyun alone.

“It's fine. It's not like I can't walk... How far is it to the hospital room anyway?”

Seung-hyun shook his head. There's a limit to overprotection. If someone saw, they would really think he was a critically ill patient who had difficulty moving.

"I have to change clothes anyway, so I'll go in first. Finish your conversation and come."

Seok-hyung reluctantly nodded. After Seung-hyun closed the door and left, Professor Kim carefully opened the conversation.

"I asked for some of your time because I have something to tell you."

"Is it a necessary conversation?"

"Yes. And... it might be better for Director Han not to know."

Professor Kim hesitated for a moment and then pulled up a screen. Seok-hyung, looking at the black and white photo, said,

"...Didn't you say there was no problem?"

"Yes. In terms of health, that's right. But there's another issue. Do you see this dot in between?"

Professor Kim asked, pointing to a corner that felt off. There was one dot that was clearly visible, although not large.

"What is this?"

Seeing that it's not a big health issue, is it a non-dangerous tumor or cyst? He thought it could be to warn him to be careful, but then there would be no need to send Seung-hyun back and talk only to Seok-hyung himself.

Although Seung-hyun would listen half-heartedly anyway, it was his body condition, and there was no need to prevent him from hearing. Finding it strange, Seok-hyung noticed Professor Kim's serious face and recognized the gravity of the situation a little.

"...What is this that..."

"....."

"Does it threaten the director's health?"

“...Honestly, the probability of that is low. It would be the case in a normal situation... but the director’s case is unique.”

Professor Kim let out a small sigh. Although it’s not easy to say, he couldn’t just keep beating around the bush forever.

“...It’s a pregnancy.”

“.....”

Seok-hyung froze on the spot and went over the words he heard. It was a straightforward statement of only five letters, not difficult to understand, but it was the most difficult thing he had heard in his life.

“...I don’t quite understand what you mean.”

“Since it’s an alpha fetus, there are many differences from a normal fetus, so it’s difficult to properly judge with just this... But for the size, the weeks might not be that low.”

In the case of alphas, there is no uterus, so there is no space for the baby to settle. So wherever it settles, it threatens the health of the mother. The risk is high, so termination is recommended, but in most cases, the difficulty of termination also increases depending on the location.

“But until the baby grows to a size that threatens the director... there is a high possibility that he won’t be able to endure.”

“.....”

Seok-hyung stared blankly at the monitor screen without saying a word. Pregnancy, an alpha pregnancy that doesn’t even reach 1 percent. He couldn’t believe that the thing he thought he would never experience in his lifetime had happened to Seung-hyun.

‘The other party is obvious.’

At least he didn’t seem like someone who played around with his body here and there, so there was no need to even think about who the baby’s father was. Seok-hyung tightly clenched his fist on his lap. He couldn’t tell if the reason his hand was trembling slightly was due to anger or shock.

"I thought it would be better not to tell the director since it could be an excessive shock."

"...You did well."

After some emotion passed briefly, Seok-hyung, who returned to being expressionless, nodded. It would definitely be better not to tell Seung-hyun.

"To recommend termination, that is also a burden just the same..."

It wouldn't be strange for any variable to occur in an alpha pregnancy. Moreover, Seung-hyun was not in a normal physical condition, so it was even more so.

"In the end, there's nothing that can be done, and it means we have to pay more attention."

"It seems so. Since it's a situation where it's better to do nothing... Regular checkups will be necessary, but it seems like it will get noisy here. I also heard about the director from a close professor today."

It meant that Seung-hyun's whereabouts had already spread enough. Professor Kim said with a troubled face,

"I made excuses roughly, but the longer you stay, the higher the possibility of getting involved in tiresome things."

Professor Kim was a person who kept his mouth quite shut. Although most people at A Hospital were like that, there was no such thing as a perfect secret. The longer the confusion lasted, the higher the probability of information leaking.

"I will recommend a reliable doctor from another place, so it would be better to get checkups there for the time being. They are more specialized in this than me anyway."

After handing over a contact, Professor Kim gave Seok-hyung a few more requests and ended the conversation. Even now, there were more than a couple of things to be concerned about, but the situation became more complicated because of the baby in his belly that was no different from a tumor.

‘It would be better... not to tell the director.’

It was partly because he was afraid of the shock, but he couldn’t imagine what Seung-hyun’s reaction would be when he heard that a baby had formed. Whatever reaction he had, it would be a shock to Seok-hyung.

It was painful to see the face and body of the person he had respected behaving in a completely different way. If only there had been a resemblance, it might have been better.

He avoided conversation with Seung-hyun even more because it was so painful to see his listless face and eyes filled with sadness. It was better that Seung-hyun didn’t say much either.

‘But if the story of the baby is added to that...’

Seok-hyung unknowingly frowned slightly. Even after leaving the doctor’s office, he stood still in the hallway for a long time, unable to come to his senses, and then belatedly came to his senses and moved his feet.

He would have already changed clothes long ago, so he would be waiting. Seok-hyung, who was hurriedly moving his feet, stopped for a moment because people were gathered in the middle of the hallway.

“If you do this here...”

The nurse’s startled voice was quite pitiful, but he only thought that he had to pass through the crowd and return to the hospital room quickly. However, he had no choice but to stop at the voice that followed.

“...You, what on earth...”

It was a voice Seok-hyung knew well. The person his master hated the most, and the one he longed for. The man who was born with what he couldn’t have and bragged about it without knowing how precious it was.

“Please step aside for a moment. He’s with me.”

“Uh, but that person...”

I should have never let him go alone after all. Seok-hyung lightly clicked his tongue as he saw Seung-hyun’s back facing Tae-sung. He knew that

something like this could happen since his location was already known, but to think it would happen in the short time he left him alone.

“Are you okay?”

“Nurse, please...”

But people’s reactions to seeing Seung-hyun were a bit strange. Seok-hyung, who supported Seung-hyun’s staggering shoulders through the crowd that started to stir, checked his condition.

“...!!”

Blood from his nose that had completely soaked the front of his hospital gown was dripping to the floor. His face, which had turned pale without a hint of color, was telling him that it was not a normal situation.

“Han Seung...”

“Step aside.”

Tae-sung took a step towards Seung-hyun, but Seok-hyung immediately pushed him away. Seung-hyun, who made eye contact with Seok-hyung, trembled his lips and collapsed on the spot.

“We will move him to the hospital room first. Please send the professor or another doctor.”

Seok-hyung, who picked up Seung-hyun without hesitation, asked the nurse who was watching the situation, and then adjusted his hold. Tae-sung was looking at the two with a startled face.

“...Please explain what this situation is...”

“Is that important in this situation?”

“.....”

“Well, Executive Han Tae-sung has always been like that. I said something useless.”

What did he say to cause this? No, just seeing his face might have been stressful, so Seung-hyun’s body might have instinctively rejected him.

Was that aspect still remaining a little bit inside Seung-hyun? Seok-hyung bit his lip, feeling a strange emotion.

In any case, the important thing right now was Seung-hyun's physical condition. He left Tae-sung behind and hurried back to the hospital room.

“.....”

Tae-sung, who was left alone on the spot, stood frozen, staring only at the bloodstains Seung-hyun had left. He still couldn't even figure out what had happened.

‘Just think of it like that. He's a villain who will disappear from your life anyway.’

The words he had heard a little while ago were still vivid. A listless and self-deprecating voice. Despite being a voice he had heard all his life, it was an unfamiliar voice to the point of giving him goosebumps.

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“I think it's because of stress. Since his body is already weakened to the point of overreacting even to mild stimulation, it would be best to have him rest as much as possible, but...”

There's nothing better than staying at the hospital for management, but this place was no longer suitable for that. Professor Kim thought for a moment and said,

“The friend I mentioned isn't loose-lipped, but since the hospital isn't large, I can't guarantee security. Finding an attending physician who can make house calls is also...”

“I understand. First, as soon as he wakes up, we'll discharge him, so I'll get the procedures done in advance.”

Seok-hyung got up from his seat to go take care of the discharge procedures. Professor Kim looked at Seung-hyun's pale face and let out a small sigh.

From the beginning, this was a patient focused on how peacefully he could spend his remaining time. Although he had seen him for a long time, it wasn't a relationship where he particularly grew fond of him. He was uncomfortable

and scary, but he never thought the day would come when this person would look so weak.

“Is everything he’s been holding back exploding all at once?”

Professor Kim unknowingly muttered to himself and got up from his seat. As Seung-hyun’s condition started to become known to people, the number of people who knew about his appearance would gradually increase one by one.

Especially since Tae-sung, who had been at odds with Seung-hyun, had come and gone, he became a little curious about how things would turn out in the future.

‘It will surely get noisy, but I hope they don’t treat him too harshly.’

The thought that he hoped Seung-hyun’s pale, drained face would at least be peaceful at the end passed through his mind. To think he would have such thoughts about Seung-hyun of all people, not someone else, Professor Kim felt like he had unknowingly become much more nosy.

“Keep an eye on his condition until Secretary Lee comes back. When he comes, return to the doctor’s office.”

“Yes, Professor.”

After entrusting Seung-hyun to the intern waiting at the door, Professor Kim returned to his seat. The rest of the story would become something unrelated to him.

But for some reason, he felt like Seung-hyun’s face would remain in his memory a little longer.

“What on earth...”

Tae-sung couldn’t leave that spot and continued to guard it until Seung-hyun disappeared into Seok-hyung’s arms and his bloodstains were erased.

He couldn’t properly grasp what had happened and what he had seen. He never knew the face he had seen so often that it was tiresome all his life could feel so unfamiliar.

It was purely coincidence that he met Seung-hyun right away at the place he had hurried to a bit, thinking that if he missed him once, he wouldn't know when he could see him again.

Seung-hyun, whom he discovered while looking around to see where the elevator to the VIP hospital room was, looked quite different from the last time he saw him.

If he had been a little further away, he might have thought it was someone else and passed by. It wasn't just because of his pale, drained face or his thinned appearance.

Listless and dazed eyes, dragging feet while walking, gaze unable to look straight ahead.

Only after watching for a moment, doubting if he had seen wrong, did he barely confirm that person was Seung-hyun. Although he was startled, he couldn't miss him. After looking at Seung-hyun for a moment, Tae-sung quickly moved his feet and approached him.

“...!”

When he pulled his wrist, Seung-hyun was startled and dragged along. Tae-sung couldn't help but be a little surprised too, as the grabbed wrist was thinner and weaker than he thought.

“Ha.”

On the other hand, Seung-hyun, who confirmed Tae-sung's face, sighed. He felt like he knew what he was trying to say without listening. It would be related to what Seok-hyung had done.

Of all times, he had to run into a bothersome person when he was alone. Although he thought his luck was terrible, come to think of it, had there been a single thing that wasn't like that since he became Han Seung-hyun?

“If you have something to say, say it quickly and go. I'm tired.”

“...Where are you sick that...”

But the words that escaped Tae-sung's lips were not what he had intended to ask all the way here, but something irrelevant.

He clearly had a lot to ask and a lot to take issue with, but the moment his eyes met Seung-hyun's, he forgot everything. Tae-sung was briefly startled by his own unintentional words, and Seung-hyun struggled to shake off his grabbed wrist.

"You didn't come here because you were curious about that."

Seung-hyun was exhausted. Perhaps it was because the time he had lived as "Han Seung-hyun" had gotten a little long, and it seemed like he had assimilated a bit into his emotions.

"Just say what you have to say and go. We're not in a relationship to have a long conversation anyway. What does my physical condition have to do with you?"

"Right now, that's..."

Tae-sung, who was about to say that wasn't important, stopped. If that's not important, then what is important? In the first place, didn't he not come here to check on Seung-hyun's health condition?

But seeing Seung-hyun's appearance, he couldn't remember what he was trying to say, what he wanted to ask, or anything.

'No. This isn't what I came here for. It's also true that no matter what Seung-hyun's health condition is, it has nothing to do with me.'

Tae-sung slightly shook his head, trying to pull himself together. Afterwards, he tried to move to a different place because they were blocking the middle of the hallway, drawing people's attention, but Seung-hyun refused.

"Just say it here."

"...Do you have to go this far?"

Tae-sung frowned and spoke for a moment. He couldn't understand Seung-hyun causing this incident when his health was so poor that he couldn't even properly take care of his own body.

Does he dislike him that much? Why is he doing this? Tae-sung pushed Seung-hyun a little towards the hallway wall and said,

"You naturally think I did that."

“Well...”

Isn't it obvious? However, Tae-sung couldn't answer and hesitated for a moment. Thinking about it after hearing Seung-hyun's words, there was no clear evidence that Seung-hyun had committed that act.

It was just that based on the circumstances, only Seung-hyun would do such a thing, so he thought he must have done it.

“Haha.”

Seung-hyun laughed a little. He knew they would naturally think of him as the culprit, but judging from the reaction, it seemed there was no definite reason or physical evidence.

He probably didn't even look into it. While thinking it was natural, he felt a little annoyed.

“Yeah, whatever. Do as you please.”

“What do you mean by that? Are you trying to say it wasn't you who did it?”

The crease between Tae-sung's brows deepened a little. Although his heart wavered a bit at Seung-hyun's bitter face, Tae-sung soon laughed in disbelief, thinking there was no way.

“Nonsense. Who doesn't know that Secretary Lee is your closest aide and won't lift a finger unless it's your order?”

“Can you be sure that Secretary Lee spread that incident?”

“I may not know much else, but I at least know who Lee Seok-hyung was under for a while and who would benefit in the short term if that became known.”

Tae-sung said, shrugging his shoulders. Yeah, knowing just that much was enough to sufficiently infer who the culprit was. Because it was an incident involving none other than Seung-hyun.

“It's not like I don't know you.”

“Is that so? You know me that well?”

Seung-hyun let out a small sneer. The current Seung-hyun is not the “Han Seung-hyun” he knows. So of course Tae-sung doesn’t know about Seung-hyun.

But does he know “Han Seung-hyun” well enough to be so confident?

“At least I know you as much as you know me.”

“Ha.”

This time, a clearer scoff escaped than a little while ago. Did Han Seung-hyun know Han Tae-sung well? From a third-person perspective, it wasn’t like that at all.

He was just caught up in hatred and only detested Tae-sung as he thought of him. As a reader, such Han Seung-hyun was pathetic, but in the end, the two were the same, only differing as the protagonist and the villain.

‘You’re a more pitiful person than I thought.’

“Then what do you think is the reason I dislike you?”

Seung-hyun asked. The current Seung-hyun knew the reason Seung-hyun abhorred Tae-sung, the reason he disliked him to the point of wanting to obstruct his future even if he himself died and disappeared.

What about Tae-sung who prided himself on knowing “Han Seung-hyun” well? He didn’t know what answer would come back, but one thing he could be sure of.

“...Because I’m getting in the way of your life. Because everything should be yours, but ever since I entered this house, your life plan has been ruined.”

Tae-sung said after hesitating a bit. There couldn’t be any other reason, could there? From the moment they first met, there wasn’t a day when hatred wasn’t in Seung-hyun’s eyes.

He just forcibly took on something he didn’t want, but those eyes that saw him as an obstacle in his life were so vicious. There was no reason to understand someone who disliked him, so he lived confronting him head-on.

“So that’s probably why.”

“You think that’s all?”

“Then what else is there?”

His thought that he, who had barely read “Han Seung-hyun” in a few letters, knew more about “Han Seung-hyun” than Tae-sung wasn’t off the mark. It might be because of “Han Seung-hyun’s” actions, but he also felt a little bitter.

Episode 114

The reason “Han Seung-hyun” hated Tae-sung so much. It was clearly jealousy and longing for someone who had what he couldn’t.

The dominant alpha trait was unnecessary for Tae-sung, but Seung-hyun was furious every time he saw Tae-sung not even hiding that he didn’t like his own trait.

Every time he saw Tae-sung, who easily obtained without any effort what someone else wanted to death and couldn’t have no matter how hard they tried, not knowing how precious it was and finding it bothersome, it must have been painful enough to want to kill him.

‘Why was such a jerk born as a dominant alpha of all people? If I had been born with that trait, no, if only I wasn’t recessive, a jerk like that wouldn’t even be a match for me.’

It would have been even more terrible because his face looked sincere saying he didn’t need this position or trait.

He wouldn’t have wanted to acknowledge jealousy and inferiority, but he wouldn’t have been able to ignore it. So every time he saw Tae-sung, he would have become even more hostile.

‘He may not know, but I know what that kind of longing is.’

I don’t know how many times I had such thoughts while living in poverty. That longing didn’t turn into anger like “Han Seung-hyun,” but at least I knew what that emotion was like.

‘Ah, my mom says to go on an overseas trip for the whole break. I just want to hang out with my friends.’

‘Still, it’s a free overseas trip. Do you dislike it that much?’

'It's annoying. It's only good for my mom, not for me. I've been many times, so it's nothing special. Long flights just give me a headache.'

If it were me, I wouldn't complain like that. It was a little enviable that someone could get annoyed by such a thing. I understood in my head that the friend who said that might have had his own difficulties, but I couldn't help feeling frustrated.

"You probably won't understand for your whole life."

"If you're going to say something, say it properly. Don't beat around the bush."

"Never mind. Just think of it like that."

"What?"

At the words implying it wasn't something he was involved in, Tae-sung grabbed Seung-hyun. He didn't want to go back with a lingering feeling from a place he came to dispel his doubts.

"Say it straight."

"Just think of it like that. Anyway, I'm just a villain who will disappear from your life."

Seung-hyun said, shaking off Tae-sung's hand. At least in front of him, he didn't want to show a weak appearance. He knows that not all of "Han Seung-hyun's" actions can be justified.

But this relationship wasn't a tangle of threads that he, not "Han Seung-hyun," could unravel, and even if he could, he didn't want to. Now that he understood "Han Seung-hyun's" heart, he wanted to take his side even once.

It's not that Tae-sung is a bad person, but it doesn't matter if he and "Han Seung-hyun" with an inferiority complex are pathetic.

In any case, since he would remain a villain to Tae-sung until the end, he wanted to say at least one thing that "Han Seung-hyun" couldn't say in the end because of his pride.

"You probably think you're a pitiful person. You think you were born with an unwanted trait and got caught up in bothersome things?"

“.....”

“It’s annoying how you think you’re the only poor person like some ill-fated protagonist.”

Tae-sung made a startled face. It was hard to believe those words came out of Seung-hyun’s mouth.

The Seung-hyun he knew hated him to death, but after growing up to some extent, he tended to choose his words pretending to be noble. Especially when there were ears to hear.

However, the words he spat out now as if he didn’t care who heard them had no pretense or hesitation.

“I think we’re done talking. If you said everything you had to say, go now.”

“...You, what on earth...”

Seung-hyun, who finished speaking, swayed slightly with a throbbing head. Perhaps it was because he had too many thoughts. His physical condition seemed to have worsened compared to a little while ago.

Tae-sung blankly stared at Seung-hyun, not noticing the murmuring sounds or Seok-hyung approaching, and only came to his senses after he collapsed.

However, he was still in a dazed state as if a screw had fallen out in the unreal situation.

“...Please explain what this situation is...”

“Is that important in this situation?”

“.....”

“Well, Executive Han Tae-sung has always been like that. I said something useless.”

Even after Seok-hyung took the collapsed Seung-hyun away, Tae-sung couldn’t leave that spot for a long time and only managed to move his feet much later and return to the car.

“Did something happen?”

Secretary Kang asked worriedly after seeing Tae-sung's absent-minded face. He couldn't tell what kind of conversation had taken place to make Tae-sung make that face. Secretary Kang started the car and said,

"You didn't have high expectations for Director Han anyway, so just think of it as it is. As expected, there's no need to even try to talk..."

"I thought I knew Han Seung-hyun completely, but it seems that's not quite the case."

At the abruptly blurted out words, Secretary Kang was so startled that he almost turned around while holding the steering wheel. What on earth did they talk about to get that reaction?

"...Check if I can meet Professor Kim tomorrow. No, even if there isn't, adjust the schedule as quickly as possible."

"Professor Kim... Do you mean Director Han's attending physician? Why him...?"

"....."

"Don't tell me... You don't mean Director Han is really sick or something, right?"

Secretary Kang said while gauging Tae-sung's reaction through the rearview mirror. Isn't he someone who wouldn't bleed a single drop even if you stabbed him? Of course, that's just a saying, and since he's human, he can get sick, but Tae-sung's expression was unusual.

'If someone saw this, they'd think Director Han has a terminal illness or something.'

"I understand. I will try to arrange the schedule as quickly as possible."

Secretary Kang didn't ask any further questions, thinking he probably wouldn't get a proper answer even if he asked, and Tae-sung's absent-minded face was too unfamiliar for him to focus on driving.

Although he had an ominous feeling that something was going wrong, he tried to ignore it and the way back to the company felt longer than usual.

“I have to... tell him...”

The informant who had brought news of Seung-hyun brought a confirmation that he was hospitalized at A Hospital. However, Jaeseong only hesitated, unable to easily decide whether to tell Jae-young this news or not.

‘We couldn’t find out the exact diagnosis... but he looked terrible. It didn’t seem like he was hospitalized just to stay in seclusion.’

As much as he hated to admit it, Jae-young was obsessed with Seung-hyun. He had never shown such an appearance even with his first love that had lasted since a much younger age.

‘How can he be so obsessed with a person like that?’

Jae-young’s appearance telling him not to speak ill of Seung-hyun was so shocking that he couldn’t forget it. He was afraid of what reaction Jae-young, who made such a face just for saying a few harsh words, would show if he delivered this news.

But he couldn’t ignore it after saying he would look into it. After agonizing, Jaeseong made up his mind while tapping the phone screen.

‘Right. Let’s not worry and just tell him this much and stop caring. He said he would tell me when everything is over.’

After a long deliberation, Jaeseong picked up the phone. Earnestly hoping that this one call would be the trigger for Jae-young to let go of his lingering feelings for Seung-hyun and cleanly give up on him, Jaeseong wished for the call to ring a little longer.

However, as if he had been waiting, the call was quickly answered, betraying Jaeseong’s wish.

—Did you find him?

At the question Jae-young asked without even a greeting, Jaeseong let out a small sigh. Why was this guy, who had been acting annoyingly leisurely, being impatient about this?

“Yeah. But... I don’t know what to make of this.”

—Where is he?

At the urgent voice that sounded like he would rush over right away, Jaeseong calmed Jae-young down. After taking a deep breath, he said to Jae-young,

“I don’t know why he’s there. Or what condition he’s in...”

—Is it a hospital?

Jaeseong was rather surprised and couldn’t answer the reply that came before he had even properly brought it up. Did he have something on his mind?

“How do you know that?”

—.....

Although he had wished so much for it not to be the case, why was he there of all places? Faced with the reality he wanted to deny, Jae-young fell silent for a long time.

He thought it wouldn’t be, that it wouldn’t be anything serious, he hoped for that, but the ominous words he had heard from Wonho were ringing in his head.

Unable to endure the awkwardness of the long silence, Jaeseong spoke first.

“I heard he’s hospitalized at A Hospital. I don’t know exactly what the problem is. Just...”

Should he also convey that he didn’t look well? Jaeseong hesitated for a moment. As the answer was delayed, Jae-young let out a small sigh.

—...Thanks.

It seemed he was going to go straight there. Jaeseong tried to say something, but soon gave up and asked one thing.

“Keep the promise that you would properly tell me when it’s over. I’m holding back even though there’s a lot I need to hear now.”

—Yeah. I will.

Although he wanted to deny the news Jaeseong had delivered, time was just passing in vain while he was doing this. Now that he knew Seung-hyun’s

whereabouts, all that was left was to confirm his face in person and finish the unfinished conversation.

He had to find out what he was hiding. Earnestly hoping that his secret wasn't the worst he was thinking of, Jae-young hurriedly prepared to leave.

Episode 115

“.....”

Seung-hyun, who opened his eyes not long after collapsing, blinked quietly. What had happened? Slowly recalling the situation right before he collapsed, he sluggishly raised his body.

“Are you alright?”

Seok-hyung, who had returned to the hospital room before Seung-hyun woke up, slowly supported his back. Seung-hyun asked,

“Now that it's come to this, has it become difficult to be discharged?”

“...No. We're leaving. Now that the location is known enough for anyone to visit, it's difficult to stay here any longer.”

He seemed a little angry. As Seung-hyun stared at his face, Seok-hyung frowned slightly and turned his head.

“What did you talk about with Executive Han?”

What did he hear to get so stressed? It was already tiring for Seung-hyun to be with Tae-sung whom he disliked, and then he collapsed. It wasn't like they could send Tae-sung away so easily. Seok-hyung bit his lip slightly, recalling Tae-sung's absent-minded face.

“He asked why you went this far.”

“Ha...”

“So I asked him if he knew why Han Seung-hyun disliked him so much.”

At those words, Seok-hyung's expression froze coldly. What a useless thing to do.

'It's something he doesn't even need to know.'

Seok-hyung also knows why Seung-hyun hates Tae-sung. But there was no need to tell Tae-sung.

He never thought Tae-sung would figure out the reason, but he also never wanted to tell him. Because Seung-hyun thought it was better to die than receive pathetic sympathy or understanding.

Tae-sung also didn't seem like someone who would think about the reason Seung-hyun disliked him, so he had been living thinking it was unrelated.

"You probably know why."

"....."

"I thought I would understand even if Han Tae-sung couldn't, though."

At Seung-hyun's calm words, Seok-hyung's eyebrows twitched. Sympathy, understanding. They were things "Han Seung-hyun" couldn't leave out among the things he disliked.

"...So, did you tell him the reason?"

"Because it was funny seeing him assert that he knew Han Seung-hyun completely."

"You shouldn't have done that."

Seok-hyung said in a resolute voice. Clear anger was felt in his blunt voice, as always.

"Executive Han has no reason to understand the director. Also, no matter how little Executive Han knows about the director, he would know more than you."

"....."

"If you had understood, there's no way you could have said such things in front of none other than Executive Han."

The same face, the same voice, the same body. Clearly, he was next to a familiar person, but why did it become more painful the longer he stayed by

his side? Seok-hyung, who had unknowingly snapped harshly, barely returned to his original self.

“Don’t pretend to care for or understand Director Han without even knowing him. And it’s best to just ignore Executive Han’s words.”

“.....”

“Since it won’t be the first or second time he’s startled by such pathetic words.”

A sharp tone that could never come out to the real “Han Seung-hyun”. Seok-hyung frowned, feeling unfamiliar with his own appearance. Is it better not to have conversations after all?

“...We decided to leave after the IV drip is finished. It will be done in about 20 minutes. I’ll leave the clothes here, so change and come out. I’ll be waiting outside.”

Seok-hyung, who didn’t want to talk anymore, left the hospital room leaving Seung-hyun behind. He thought about what to do during the ambiguously empty time, but it was brief, and he decided to go to the car and organize the luggage.

There wasn’t much to touch, but he wanted to spend time doing something. Seok-hyung tried to touch the clean inside of the car for no reason and decided to organize the trunk.

“Wait a moment.”

But the moment he got out of the car and tried to open the trunk, someone’s urgent voice grabbed Seok-hyung. Turning around to face the owner of the voice, Seok-hyung immediately recognized his identity.

It was the first time facing him up close, but it was a man whose face he had seen to the point of being sick through photos and videos.

“You’re Secretary Lee Seok-hyung, right?”

The face that seemed to have run here, panting roughly, was a little thinner than the last photo he saw. But it was nothing compared to Seung-hyun.

The father of the child in Seung-hyun's belly that Seung-hyun doesn't know about, and the man who keeps making the Seung-hyun he knows disappear. Ju Jae-young was standing in front of Seok-hyung.

"...I came knowing that Han Seung-hyun is here."

"....."

"I have something to say. Please let me see him even for a moment. In the car..."

"He's not here."

The moment Jae-young was catching his breath and trying to look inside the car, Seok-hyung stopped him. He had no intention whatsoever of letting Seung-hyun and Jae-young meet.

"You're a step too late. The director has already left."

Seok-hyung lied without blinking an eye. He couldn't let this man wander around freely anymore.

If being with this man had even a little positive influence on Seung-hyun, and if it could delay the deterioration of Seung-hyun's health even a little, he might not have interfered in the two's desperate relationship.

But the person who made the current Seung-hyun was Jae-young. The person who made the familiar face make unfamiliar expressions, who made him sink into lethargy day by day.

He was someone who wouldn't be of help even if they were together, someone Seok-hyung didn't really want to face either. So there was no reason to arrange a meeting between the two.

"...Wait, even once is fine."

"The director doesn't want to."

When he brought up Seung-hyun, Jae-young's expression hardened. But if he was going to back down easily, he wouldn't have come all the way here.

"I can't end this until I see his face and hear what he has to say directly. Please tell him yourself."

“If you had wanted to do that, you could have met him and talked a long time ago.”

Seok-hyung said with an indifferent face. Seeing him getting thinner with a face full of lingering feelings, he thought Seung-hyun must also have things he wanted to say to this man, but he didn't want to let them meet.

“There must be a reason why he can't be reached, right? You can think of that as a kind of answer.”

There was no reason to be kind to this man who was the cause of the Seung-hyun he knew gradually being erased.

“There's no point in being here like this. The director has already been discharged and went home.”

“.....”

“Not to the place you know, but to a place where he can rest without bothersome people.”

It would be right to cut it off without leaving a single lingering feeling. Seok-hyung took a step closer to Jae-young and said,

“He said he wants to rest for a while without getting involved in bothersome things. And you're clearly at the center of those bothersome things.”

“.....”

“You may be under the delusion that you have a special relationship, but the director is not that kind of person.”

“What kind of person is he not?”

“...He's not the type to act lightly enough to be swayed by an illusory emotion and take actions that won't benefit him.”

Seok-hyung slowly asserted about Seung-hyun. The director he knew, “Han Seung-hyun,” was never that kind of person. Even if it wasn't for a very long time, he couldn't not know it as the one who had seen Seung-hyun from the closest place.

“...No.”

“Don’t be stubborn. It seems you have nothing more to say.”

Seok-hyung turned off the car’s engine and turned away from Jae-young. What if he can’t accept such a thing? Seung-hyun would never meet Jae-young again, and then there would be no more variables.

The moment he was about to return to the hospital room like that, Jae-young’s words grabbed Seok-hyung.

“Han Seung-hyun dislikes being called Director Han.”

“.....”

With a face that was a mess without time to manage his expression, Seok-hyung approached Jae-young.

“I don’t know with what confidence you’re saying such things. I’m the one who knows him better than anyone.”

“.....”

“Someone like you.”

Seok-hyung was so engulfed in anger that he momentarily forgot Seung-hyun’s teaching that revealing his expression was like showing his hand.

‘How dare he pretend to know about the director.’

“He’s not someone you can recklessly assert about.”

“That’s what I want to say.”

Jae-young didn’t back down despite the hostile atmosphere. A conversation that went awry as if talking about someone else. But neither of them doubted their own thoughts.

“I don’t know who the secretary is talking about, who he’s seeing through Han Seung-hyun.”

“...!”

“Han Seung-hyun is definitely not that kind of person. So...”

“...Please leave.”

Seok-hyung cut off Jae-young's words before he could even finish. He had to deny it, saying it was nonsense, but he couldn't easily deny it. It felt like he would get caught up in those words at this rate.

“I already conveyed the director's opinion. So don't bother him anymore.”

“Not yet...”

He was about to say the conversation wasn't over yet, but Seok-hyung moved his feet quickly to the hospital as if running away. He tried to follow, but he was denied entry as Seok-hyung entered the VIP ward, so he had no choice but to turn back.

“Please leave.”

He tried to wait outside thinking Seok-hyung's words could be a lie, but security personnel who came down to the parking lot, perhaps arranged by Seok-hyung, chased Jae-young out. Having no connection to A Hospital, Jae-young, who had to come out without saying a word, circled the hospital several times waiting for Seok-hyung's car to come out. But as time passed and the sun set, the car he was waiting for didn't come out.

Episode 116

“We've arrived.”

Seok-hyung, who took a slightly longer route to avoid running into Jae-young, headed straight to their new residence. The hastily found residence was located a bit outside of Seoul.

While moving a not-so-close distance, he was quite worried that Seung-hyun's condition might worsen, but fortunately, perhaps thanks to Seung-hyun sleeping the whole time, they were able to arrive without any major issues.

“Don't worry about anything else and just don't overdo it. The doctor will come for checkups twice a week. There will be times when you'll need to go to the hospital for regular checkups, but...”

Seung-hyun quietly listened to Seok-hyung's words and thought. Is there any big meaning in doing this? He knew best that his physical condition was worsening day by day. He wouldn't be able to hold on for long anyway.

'No, never mind.'

But since there was nothing else he particularly wanted to do, maybe it would be better to follow the wishes of the person who at least cared about his body. Seung-hyun nodded, thinking that. Afterward, while listening to Seok-hyung's words and quietly looking out the window, Seung-hyun slightly frowned at the glare.

It was a house with a pretty view. Not too far from the city, but one that required a car to get around. However, the neat house located in a quiet place with good air somehow felt to Seung-hyun like just a pretty execution ground isolated from reality.

'...Come to think of it, the weather has fully warmed up now.'

While in the hospital, complete spring had arrived. Looking around the spotlessly clean interior, Seung-hyun recalled something and had slightly bitter eyes.

Seeing the display cabinet set up on one side of the living room, he remembered Jae-young who had said they should fill it up so they could see the changing seasons at a glance.

"If there are any items you need to bring from the house you stayed at before, please let me know. I will stop by and get them tomorrow."

At Seok-hyung's words, Seung-hyun, who had returned to reality, let out a small sigh. Right, it was something meaningless now.

"....."

"It would be best for you to rest for today. I will be staying in the room next to the stairs, so if you need anything, please let me know."

Seok-hyung, who briefly conveyed his business, went into his room. It was a room close to Seung-hyun's bedroom, but not the closest one.

Was it to keep just that distance from him? Seung-hyun, who had been looking at the closed door, went into his own bedroom. Unlike the room where he had personally chosen and decorated each piece of furniture, it was a neat but stark room like the one he stayed in when he first became “Han Seung-hyun”.

“The cell phone.”

Come to think of it, he hadn’t turned on his cell phone even once while in the hospital. Seung-hyun looked at the cell phone connected to the charger next to the nightstand for a moment and then long-pressed the power button.

‘Will there be any messages?’

The number of people who knew this number was extremely limited. And among them, there was only one person with whom he exchanged what could be called contact.

Would there be any contact from that person? If so, where would it have been cut off?

Although he didn’t want to know, he couldn’t avoid it forever.

Before long, as the cell phone power fully turned on, the piled-up contacts flooded the screen. The first thing he checked was the missed calls.

Quite a few missed calls from Jae-young’s contact and unsaved numbers had accumulated.

Most of them were calls that came right after Seung-hyun collapsed. Seung-hyun ignored all the calls from unsaved numbers and focused on the calls from the one saved number.

After that day, there was no trace for a while, but starting a little while later, there were traces of Seung-hyun being sought out several times a day. However, as if expressing a tiring heart, the traces gradually decreased day by day from a certain point.

The last one was about a week ago.

“ ”

There was a considerable number marked on the message window as well, but he couldn't check that far. If seeing the decreasing number of missed calls each day made his heart this complicated, he felt like he would do something foolish again if he read the content of the texts.

He knew well that he didn't have much time left and that any further human relationships were greed. The unresolved fatigue and lethargy that he was suppressing with painkillers were telling him, so he couldn't not know.

'If I was going to be selfish, it would have been better to be selfish until the end.'

He thought pushing him away was the right thing to do, but in one corner of his heart, it seemed he still couldn't let go of his lingering attachment.

If only he had been a person who could not think about the future after he disappeared, or the heart of the person left behind.

"...No."

However, Seung-hyun soon shook his head. Since his death was unchangeable anyway, it was right to leave only one person in pain.

It would have been better if they had never met from the beginning. If he hadn't known this feeling, he could have been satisfied with pretending to be a golden spoon even if it wasn't in his fate and left.

"....."

Was it because his heart had also weakened as his body weakened? The tear glands he thought had dried up were getting damp again.

He had reassured himself several times, thinking it would be okay and that this was the right thing to do, but he was tired of lying. But it was not something he could turn back on after coming this far.

So that the small sobs wouldn't leak out the door, Seung-hyun buried his head in the blanket. The cell phone he had barely turned on soon went back into the drawer before long.

But tears and sadness couldn't be hidden in the drawer. The lights in Seung-hyun's new house stayed on for quite a long time.

“He said he’s going home today, right?”

“If there’s anything you need, please tell me now.”

“...The laptop, and...”

Seung-hyun hesitated for a moment. An item he wanted to bring came to mind, but he hesitated to ask for it.

‘...Even just that one thing.’

After a long deliberation, Seung-hyun, who finally decided to ask, slowly opened his mouth.

“...Deep in the top drawer of the dresser, there should be a black cat doll. I’d like you to bring that.”

Although his expression remained the same, a feeling of displeasure could be sensed. In fact, although Seok-hyung nodded, he didn’t like Seung-hyun’s request.

‘He’s not a little kid to have dolls and such.’

He probably didn’t want to play with dolls, and he thought it must be a meaningful item, but he disliked it even more because of that. However, since talking at length would only make himself feel complicated, he left the house without saying a word.

There was quite a distance between the house Seung-hyun had been living in and the current residence. Leaving the house for a not-so-short time with a sick person was worrisome, but on the other hand, he wanted to get away from this house even like this.

‘Guarding Director Han’s side is an obvious duty.’

Even if Seung-hyun became a vegetable, even if he became a different person who was only the same on the outside. No matter what form he changed into, he had to stay by his side.

It was no exaggeration to say it was a value that had never changed for a single moment since the day he vowed to dedicate his everything to him, a value that supported Seok-hyung's life.

However, as time passed, it was becoming painful to see Seung-hyun. It was painful to realize that the person he had respected so much was no longer there, to constantly discover unfamiliar parts in the familiar face and body.

Even if he made the foolish decision to cling to a severed relationship, even if everyone pointed fingers saying it was crazy, he thought it wouldn't matter, but this situation was gradually becoming burdensome.

His head was throbbing because he couldn't fall asleep until dawn while listening to Seung-hyun's sobs that filled the house all night. But he had no intention of giving up.

'I can't be the first to leave Director Han. That would be a betrayal.'

However, as time passed, it was inevitable that the question of whether this was right grew heavier along with the pain. Seok-hyung, who arrived at Seung-hyun's house with a complicated heart, entered the house by familiarly pressing the password.

It wasn't the first time seeing it, but it was an excessively unfamiliar house. It must be because it was a completely different space from Seung-hyun's usual taste.

Seung-hyun preferred a neat design and disliked deviating from a regular arrangement. He had no preference for colors other than achromatic ones. He also didn't prefer decorations, so Seung-hyun's house was always a space that couldn't be described in any other way than neat.

But this house was a space that was too unfamiliar to Seok-hyung. Rather than simply a house for sleeping and living, it evoked a cozy feeling with various colors harmonized, although not to the extent of being colorful.

Seok-hyung, who discovered the half-filled display cabinet, stopped in front of it for a moment. Did he play house or something? Frowning, he passed by the display cabinet and looked around the house to get the items Seung-hyun had requested.

"...Is this it?"

After picking up the laptop on the desk, Seok-hyung opened the drawer and found the cat doll. He placed the doll, which was much smaller than his palm and had a sense of age, on his hand and clenched it tightly as if he would crush it.

Episode 117

Considering it seemed to be quite an old item, it was more likely something Seung-hyun received from Jae-young rather than purchased himself. The thought crossed his mind that it was too shabby of an item to give as a gift.

‘Why would he give something like this as a gift?’

Seok-hyung glared at the slightly crumpled doll in his hand and tossed it to the floor with a thud. As expected, it was an item that didn’t suit “Han Seung-hyun”. Perhaps that weakened man, but not him.

“...What am I thinking?”

Seok-hyung soon shook his head. As long as that body was still alive, “Han Seung-hyun” was “Han Seung-hyun”. Even knowing the person inside was different, nothing changed.

‘The director is just the director. At least to me, he has to be.’

Seok-hyung looked at the cat doll that had fallen to the floor for a moment and picked it up again. Yes, it was just a doll, nothing more. It would be stranger to pay attention to it.

Just tell him, Seok-hyung thought as he stuffed the doll into his pocket. He had gotten everything he was asked for, but his feet wouldn’t easily leave, perhaps because he didn’t want to go back to the house.

I have to go back. There was no room for such childish whining. Seok-hyung recalled Seung-hyun and left the unfamiliar house. It was a strange day when he had the contradictory thought of missing the face he saw every day.

The rumor that Seung-hyun’s health condition seemed serious spread quickly. Some didn’t believe it, but since there were people who directly witnessed the

incident in the hospital lobby, the rumor that gained eyewitnesses had no choice but to spread faster and more credibly.

Professor Kim and A Hospital didn't easily leak patient information, but they couldn't keep their mouths shut under the direct pressure of Chairman Han, the hospital's biggest sponsor.

'...It's not a light illness. It must have had an impact on him leaving the company as well. And... it will be difficult for him to return to the company.'

It was an indirect expression, but not words that were difficult to understand. At the dining table where no one cared about the empty seat, Chairman Han lightly spoke.

"There must be people who looked into that guy's news."

"....."

"....."

"Did you find out anything?"

Chairman Han tentatively probed his family members. Taehyeop put down his utensils and said,

"I heard the rumors but don't know the details. And I plan to continue not knowing in the future."

It meant he didn't want to hear news about Seung-hyun. He didn't care what happened to the son who had already escaped his control. He had heard rumors of him coughing up blood somewhere, but it didn't concern him.

His mother was the same. She hadn't even heard the rumors about Seung-hyun, and just hearing his name made her slightly frown as if she felt unpleasant.

"Well, I did hear he's not in good health. But... that child isn't ordinarily tenacious. Perhaps it's a deliberately spread rumor."

At his father's light words, Tae-sung put down his utensils and gauged the atmosphere at the table. It seemed no one was taking it seriously.

It wasn't that they thought Seung-hyun's condition would be light. They had faces as if it didn't matter what happened to Seung-hyun, as if listening to someone else's story.

If Seon-hu had been at this table, at least one person would have had a different expression. Then, even in this barren family...

'Useless thought.'

Tae-sung picked up his utensils again. It's not like he didn't contribute to this atmosphere either, is it?

It's ridiculous to have such thoughts now. Thinking that, Tae-sung continued his meal. After roughly observing the table's atmosphere and clicking his tongue, Chairman Han said,

"Innate temperament is also an ability. It's admirable that he tried hard, but in the end, this is his limit."

"....."

"Just leave him alone. I've decided to treat him as a nonexistent person now too."

After saying that, Chairman Han continued his meal as if nothing had happened. To him, they were words of favor in a way.

Don't bother him and quietly leave him alone, it was his way of consideration, but to Tae-sung, those words felt abnormal.

In any case, it was family he had seen all his life. Even with people you only exchange greetings with in passing, isn't it normal to worry and check on their condition if you hear they are sick?

"Tsk tsk. This is why recessives are no good. I heard from Dr. Han that recessives have a higher probability of causing pheromone issues. It means they don't have a properly functioning body."

"....."

Upon hearing those words, Seung-hyun's mother's face turned a little pale, but it wasn't because she was worried about her son. She was just

embarrassed to have it confirmed that what she gave birth to was a failure, without a shred of parental love or concern.

‘I wish he would just die.’

Her hand was trembling weakly with a face that clearly showed what she was thinking. Soon returning to a barely calm face, she replied,

“That’s right.”

It must be the child she painfully gave birth to, but how can she hate him so much just because he was born with the recessive trait?

He knew from the beginning that this family was out of their minds, but he felt that way even more after thinking more about Seung-hyun.

‘Perhaps I had become too used to this house without realizing it. I didn’t even think it was strange until I became aware of it.’

Maybe he thought it was no big deal even though he knew. Thinking that, Tae-sung slightly frowned.

To the point of being embarrassed that he thought he knew Seung-hyun well, his face he encountered not long ago was only unfamiliar and awkward.

A face that made him think a lot, and the conversation. Perhaps it was because they had lived hating each other as a matter of course, but he had never once thought about the reason.

‘...It’s no wonder. How could anyone live sanely in a house like this?’

Parents who pathologically resent Seung-hyun’s trait. In an atmosphere that considers children as tools rather than people, when Tae-sung, born with the dominant trait, expressed resentment towards his own trait in front of him.

Back then, he had never been aware that the relationship was twisted beyond repair, so how arrogant and delusional was it to think he knew Seung-hyun through and through?

He had never thought about what kind of life Seung-hyun had lived since receiving the diagnosis that he had a high probability of presenting as a recessive, so there was no way he could know about Seung-hyun.

Even he himself, who had lived about half his life somewhere else, had lived in this house tainted without even knowing what the problem was.

'If we meet again, I think I'll be able to have a bit more proper conversation then. Perhaps I wasted the opportunity that might not be left much in this way.'

"Tae-sung, hasn't it been quite a while since you had a health checkup? Take this opportunity to get a checkup too. Well, there shouldn't be any problems, but it won't hurt to check."

At the words that sounded like concern, the atmosphere on the dining table changed strangely. Now, Tae-sung was the only remaining successor, and the recent incident had also completely subsided.

These days, there was a nuance that Tae-sung was seen as a stable successor, but it wasn't pleasant. Tae-sung roughly nodded and continued his meal.

After finishing the meal without being able to properly remember how he spent the remaining time, his father, who had shown little interest in him, patted his shoulder and said something, but it was words that didn't even need to be paid attention to, so he let it flow out the other ear.

It was utterly unwelcome attention. Is there anyone stupid enough to be swayed by such transparent words? Tae-sung roughly answered and spotted Taehyeop leaving Chairman Han's house, so he hid himself.

There was no need to hide, but he found it bothersome to run into him and have to exchange a few unnecessary words.

"They say people change when they are about to die. Maybe that's the case."

"...But that tenacious one doesn't seem like he would die easily. If he's going to do that, he should at least not bring shame to his parents' faces."

They may not get along, but they are Seung-hyun's parents after all, so they would talk about related matters. Thinking that, Tae-sung waited for the two to finish talking and get in the car.

"Forget it. You, me, and that kid all dislike seeing each other's faces anyway, so it's a good thing."

“I guess the words motherly love and you can never coexist. I thought you would care at least a little.”

“Ha, are you in any position to say that? What do you want me to do? Just looking at him gives me goosebumps. If you’re so concerned, why don’t you try being a late father?”

Seung-hyun’s mother said that and got in the car first. Taehyeop frowned at the sight, but it was clear from the sigh that it wasn’t out of concern for Seung-hyun.

“Let’s go.”

It was just words to criticize his wife, without a shred of Seung-hyun’s concern or parental duty.

‘...It seems Han Seung-hyun wanted to be acknowledged by them in his own way.’

Until a little while ago, he thought there wouldn’t be any fool who would fall for a few transparent, obvious words, but come to think of it, there seemed to be such a person not too far away.

Feeling strange, Tae-sung stayed in that spot for a while even after the two’s car left. It was a night full of thoughts.

Memes From Aida

Episode 118

Seok-hyung, who had returned, entered inside a bit hastily due to the excessive silence. Fortunately, Seung-hyun was just sleeping.

“.....”

Seok-hyung stared down at him for a moment. Without saying a word, just closing his eyes and gasping for breath, but that face was unfamiliar.

It was clearly the same face. Even now, when he wasn't talking or making any expression, the change in his impression was clearly visible.

Even though he thought it was just his mood, he kept noticing different parts. No, in the first place, if it was “Han Seung-hyun”, he wouldn't have shown himself sleeping defenseless in front of him.

Every time he discovered little by little a different appearance from the one he knew, every time that appearance felt unfamiliar, Seok-hyung felt strange. Seok-hyung, who had been quietly looking at him a little longer, placed the items he brought on the table and left the room.

“Haa...”

Seok-hyung, who had returned to his room, hung his head with a long sigh. While being with Seung-hyun, he was also changing little by little.

Since starting to serve “Han Seung-hyun”, his director, he had learned to hide his emotions. In order to live without being swayed by his own emotions or the emotions of others. To not be shaken by trivial matters and not show any gaps, he had erased his expressions and suppressed his emotions.

But what about himself these days? He was too emotional and often gripped by impulsive thoughts. It wasn't just Seung-hyun who had changed.

He had no choice but to admit that something inside him was gradually crumbling. His face crumpling at trivial things, his easily escaping sighs. They were clearly far from his normal self.

He had vowed to stay by Seung-hyun's side no matter what. Even now, that thought hadn't changed, but as time passed, he wondered if the person he was guarding was really Seung-hyun.

Was his belief this ridiculous? Even as self-deprecating laughter came out, every time Seung-hyun felt unfamiliar, he came to rationalize his own actions.

At the end of running forward like that, what remained was not relief or a sense of achievement, but only self-loathing. He was by Seung-hyun's side for his own greed, but what was the reason he felt lonely every time he saw that face? Perhaps he knew best himself.

It was just that he didn't want to acknowledge it, he wanted to delay the end of the two of them even a little, so he was turning a blind eye.

“.....”

However, that didn't last long either. It was an undeniable fact that the end was approaching.

Seok-hyung, who had been thinking that he didn't want to end it with his own hands, that he wished everything would end without having time to do anything, raised his head.

'It's a weak thought. To grovel as if staying by his side is for him, how ridiculous.'

He knew best that it wasn't for Seung-hyun, but his own stubborn persistence. Because he had never imagined a life without that person, he had erased the option of leaving on his own and was just being stubborn.

But it was precarious. The feeling of running on thin ice that seemed like it would break at any moment. The uneasiness that Seok-hyung had never felt even once while staying by Seung-hyun's side was slowly eating away at him.

“...There's not much time left.”

Seok-hyung washed his face and got up from his seat. There was no need to complain, and it would be enough to focus on what he could do. Seok-hyung went out to prepare a meal.

In the meantime, Seung-hyun must have woken up, as movement was heard from inside the room, but Seok-hyung didn't bother to open the door and just prepared dinner. It was the same when it was time to eat.

“Please eat as much as possible even if you don’t have an appetite. However, there’s no need to force yourself if your stomach is upset. If you don’t think you can finish it, just leave it. I’ll clean it up.”

Conveying only his business without properly making eye contact, Seok-hyung entered his room again and waited for Seung-hyun to finish his meal. The bizarre cohabitation of living in the same house and sensitively checking his physical condition, but not having any trivial conversations, continued like that.

“Just give up. I hate to say this, but... there’s no one in this field who doesn’t know what kind of existence Secretary Lee is to Director Han. Every word and action of Secretary Lee. They are practically Director Han’s will.”

“.....”

“If that’s what he told you, then just... it’s right to give up. No, I don’t want to say this either, but...”

Jaeseong, who had barged into Jae-young’s house, muttered in a greatly shrunken voice, unlike the momentum with which he had kicked the door open. Although he came all this way, putting work aside with the thought that he had to say what needed to be said, when he actually saw Jae-young’s face, he couldn’t help but be wary.

Surely Jaeseong wasn’t the only one who couldn’t understand that blind faith, as if possessed by something.

‘He won’t even let me talk about it.’

As an older brother, he was keeping his mouth shut for the sake of family peace, but it was too heavy of a matter to know and handle alone. The moment it became known, his family would surely pour out criticism asking why he was the only one who knew.

But the matter at hand took precedence over that criticism. Jaeseong let out a long sigh, looking at Jae-young who was tapping his fingers without answering.

“There are so many good people in the world. It’s an old-fashioned thing to say, but... he’s not even an omega, not someone with a good reputation. It’s not because you’re family, but you’re too good for...”

“Have you ever talked to him?”

“Huh?”

Jaeseong blinked in surprise at Jae-young’s first words, who had only silently stared at his face even when he barged in. Is it about that again? Soon sighing deeply, he answered,

“You thinking you know that person best. That’s a misunderstanding, I’m telling you. With just a few months of experience...”

“No, I’m just curious what kind of person he was that I don’t know about.”

He wasn’t being sarcastic or expressing his own opinion, he was genuinely curious. Jae-young had only heard a few rumors about Seung-hyun at best.

At least Jaeseong must have met him while working, and they must have had conversations. Wouldn’t he know Seung-hyun a bit better than the rumors?

He had been living thinking there was no need to pay attention to him, that he was different from the rumors each time, but he had never seriously dug into Seung-hyun’s past.

What kind of person was he that everyone who spoke of him frowned and dissuaded him? Jae-young tapped the armrest of the sofa, waiting for an answer.

“...Well, I’m not very close with him either. But I have met him and talked to him a few times.”

It wasn’t a very wide field, and he was such a famous and influential person that he naturally left a strong impression.

“He never caused any problems in front of me. The business Director Han was in charge of was different from ours, so there was no reason to get involved, and lightly exchanging greetings and regards was all, so there was no reason for that.”

“ ”

“Yeah, honestly, there’s a lot about the rumors that I don’t know well either. But it’s not like you have to know deeply to judge, right?”

Jaeseong recalled Seung-hyun in his memory. Although there were no special conversations, he was a person who left a particularly deep impression.

“It’s a bit, should I say, spine-chilling?”

He clearly had a polite and pitiful impression on the outside. So much so that it was hard to believe the ominous rumors related to his schemes.

A likable appearance, a decent attire. Speech and behavior that were neither too light nor too heavy. Clearly, the first impression was perfect enough to make one forget the rumors, but while having a conversation, one could tell.

The thoroughly calculated actions that gave goosebumps, the awkwardness that was felt even when he was smiling, that kind of person.

“Just looking at his outward actions, there were no problems at all. Since we had no reason to get publicly involved with him, there was no reason to have ill feelings, so there was no reason for the relationship to be bad.”

“.....”

“It might have felt that way because his humanity wasn’t felt. Should I say his acting to appear perfect was obvious?... Anyway. It’s hard to express in words, but it was like that.”

Jaeseong said, ruffling his hair. To think it was prejudice, he also had a businessman’s intuition.

‘I hope you don’t take it as me saying nonsense because I dislike him.’

Thinking that, Jaeseong waited for Jae-young’s answer. Jae-young, who looked lost in thought, was gradually increasing the frequency of tapping the armrest.

It didn’t seem like he didn’t believe what Jaeseong said. Then what could he be thinking about? Unable to endure the silence, Jaeseong said,

“Or should I find someone who knows Director Han a bit better? I don’t know the details, but among my friends, surely...”

“I’m sure I thought the same way when I first saw him too.”

Jae-young muttered in a low voice. Surely, the Seung-hyun that Jae-young had first properly faced, the one he met at Seon-hu’s wedding, was the kind of person Jaeseong described.

A person who smiled softly and dealt with people, but whose twisted inside was clearly visible unlike his calm face. That was his first impression too, which he had completely forgotten.

“...Is it because he’s not someone who acts so perfectly?”

However, if there was one thing that hadn’t changed, it was that both then and now, Seung-hyun was ultimately a person whose inside was clearly visible. That’s why he couldn’t give up even more. He couldn’t believe that the Seung-hyun he knew wasn’t his real self.

“No, I think I just like him too much.”

Perhaps it didn’t matter at all. Even if he heard harsh words for seeing and believing what he wanted, he couldn’t say anything because his head was so full of thoughts of Seung-hyun. Jae-young smiled bitterly.

Memes From Aida

Episode 119

“You...”

"I know I don't know that person very well either. But that's why I can't give up even more."

"....."

Jaeseong, who was about to launch into a long lecture again, sighed after seeing Jae-young's face. This wasn't something that could be solved with words.

Even a moth flying to find its place to die wouldn't have such a determined face. Why did he always choose difficult loves?

"Forget it. Forget it. Talking more will only make my mouth hurt."

Jaeseong, who realized a little late but clearly that persuasion wouldn't work, clicked his tongue and got up. Yeah, however it turned out, it was a problem Jae-young had to solve himself, not something he should meddle in.

"Do as you please. But don't think it will be resolved. I clearly warned you."

"...Thanks for your concern."

"You're only grateful in words. Anyway, you're going to do everything your way."

Jaeseong patted Jae-young's shoulder without lingering and left. He felt like he had raised his youngest brother too indulgently.

He'll only know after getting hurt once. It was out of his hands now. Jaeseong bid a light farewell and left the house.

It would be difficult to get more help, but he had no intention of giving up like this. It would be a bit complicated and bothersome path, but he had to somehow gather information.

'If he's really sick, I don't want to leave him alone.'

He wanted to hear that it was just his misunderstanding, but even if it wasn't, even if he faced the worst case scenario he could imagine, he wouldn't run away.

It seemed he liked Seung-hyun much more than he thought. Even if it was a cliff with an obvious end, he wanted to check for himself.

Otherwise, he would surely regret it later. Jae-young turned on his cell phone and looked through the countless call records that didn't go through.

He had been staring at the familiar phone number from which only the answer that it was connecting to voicemail because the power was off came back, and at some point, he became afraid to press the call button. After hesitating for a moment, Jae-young pressed the call button for the first time in a long time.

“...!”

He made the call thinking the mechanical voice would naturally come back, but when the call connected, Jae-young rather dropped his phone in surprise. The phone that fell to the floor continued to make the call connection sound, regardless.

“.....”

And at the same time, there was someone quietly staring at the cell phone screen with a small vibration.

Turning on the phone was just an impulsive action. Even though he thought there would be no contact, he knew why he kept checking, but he was fiddling with his phone, pretending not to know.

If it was simply to pass the time, he could have solved it with a laptop or the books piled up on the nightstand next to the bed, but Seung-hyun, who had been looking at the world through the small screen that fit in his palm, soon threw the phone by his pillow, tired of that too.

It was because the letters wouldn't properly enter his head, making him feel stuffy instead. Perhaps because his body had gotten worse, he was lying on the bed, wasting time with a body that often became dazed and tired.

He wasn't sleepy, but because his body was tired, time passed quickly just lying absentmindedly. What pulled Seung-hyun, who had been slowly sinking into unconsciousness like that, back to reality was an unexpected vibration sound.

Until then, he had thought it wasn't a big deal. Until he saw the familiar number and the saved name on the screen.

Was he dreaming? Was it because he couldn't completely let go of his lingering feelings, so he was having this dream? But it was too heavy for a dream, and the air and his body were telling him that this moment was reality.

The desire to answer and the realistic problem of what to say if he answered confused Seung-hyun's mind. He wanted to hear the voice, but he didn't want to let his own voice be heard.

“.....”

Seung-hyun just froze and stared down at the phone screen. While blankly staring at the screen, not knowing time was passing, the unanswered call went to voicemail.

However, it didn't take long for the call to come again. As soon as the screen returned to voicemail, Seung-hyun turned the phone to silent and put it back in the drawer, frightened by the call that came again.

How could he approach like this? It was both joyful and sad that Jae-young approached him without giving up, as if he had never been hurt.

It would have been better if he had been someone he couldn't have, if it had been a one-sided feeling. He would have thought it was a person he couldn't have anyway, a feeling that couldn't be fulfilled, and would have buried it.

'If Ju Jae-young gave up on me, it would be sad but not miserable.'

The fact that he couldn't hold on to what had come into his hands, the fact that he couldn't have what should have been his, was miserable.

If he couldn't have it, it would have been better if it hadn't come into his hands in the first place. No, before that, he shouldn't have left that feeling to grow this big.

'It would have been better not to meet.'

He clearly liked him, it wasn't even a mismatched feeling, but that feeling hurt so much. Love that was only sweet and happy was clearly a path that would have been happy for everyone if left as just a fantasy.

“.....”

A teardrop flowed down his cheek. He thought he had become numb to some extent, but it seemed he wasn't. The moment the single teardrop that flowed down fell to the floor, the sadness that had been waiting rushed in and engulfed Seung-hyun.

"Hic."

He tried hard not to make a sound, but it didn't go as he wanted. He thought he had become used to not crying at most things, but he had just been suppressing it.

Rather than knowing this feeling, rather than knowing his lingering attachment to life and being tormented while imagining a happy future, it would have been better to die on the spot.

Was the phone in the drawer still ringing? What would he talk about if he answered the phone? Jae-young was a kind person, so he would first want to know what happened.

Since such a thing happened in the middle of the hospital, rumors about him would have spread quickly, and there was no way those rumors wouldn't have reached Jae-young's ears. If he answered, wouldn't he first ask if he was okay?

If he reluctantly shared his story, he would be more heartbroken than himself. He kept imagining what he would say and what expression he would make.

As that imagination became more concrete, the kinder Jae-young in his imagination was, the more his crying grew louder. He tried to muffle it by pulling the blanket over his head, but it didn't go as he wanted.

And as the sadness grew, Seung-hyun began to resent something absurd. The thought that it would have been better if he hadn't known happiness spread to resentment toward the person who had shown him happiness.

In one corner of his mind, he knew it was just venting anger, but if he could think rationally, he wouldn't have started thinking like this in the first place.

Why did he make him fall in love? If Jae-young hadn't been there, if he hadn't known his kindness, he wouldn't have been this miserable.

If he hadn't known, he wouldn't have missed him this much.

His mind, which had become such a mess that he couldn't even judge the natural order of whether love or resentment came first, poured out complaints as soon as it found a target to resent.

But no matter how much he resented, all that remained was longing. Was the phone in the drawer still ringing? He was curious, but he didn't have the courage to open it. It had been a long time since he couldn't tell what he wanted or what the best choice was.

In the end, Seung-hyun chose to curl up without reaching his hand out of the bed. He felt like he might not be able to open that drawer for quite a long time.

At some point, without even realizing that he couldn't stop the sobbing sound, Seung-hyun fell asleep as if collapsing after crying for a long time. After the sobbing sound subsided like that and no movement was felt inside for quite a long time, the door quietly opened.

The reddened eyes and the traces of tears left on his cheeks, the gasping breathing sound was regular, but it was impossible to be sure whether he had collapsed or fallen asleep.

Seok-hyung, who had properly covered him with the blanket and lightly checked if Seung-hyun's condition was okay, stared at his sleeping face for a long time. He thought he would never see the day these eyes would turn red, but in just a few months, he got to see various expressions on this face.

“.....”

The face he had avoided because he didn't want to admit it, but the face he could no longer run away from was reflected under the bright light.

'He's a weakened person. He looks more miserable now than when he was given the terminal diagnosis.'

Would it have been a slightly different impression if he had shown this reaction on the day he was given the terminal diagnosis? Although he had collapsed, his reaction was rather calm after waking up, so his current appearance was even more unfamiliar.

An excessively unfamiliar face, an unfamiliar person. Seok-hyung watched that sight a little longer, then turned off the light and closed the door. The

conviction that he could no longer run away from the reality he had wanted to deny made his steps light.

Memes From Aida

Episode 120

Seeing the blanket covering him even though he didn't remember falling asleep, it seemed Seok-hyung had come and gone. Seung-hyun absentmindedly went out of the room and upon discovering Seok-hyung sitting on the living room sofa, he awkwardly averted his gaze.

He knew Seok-hyung didn't want to face him. It was understandable that he had no choice but to dislike Seung-hyun who had the same face as his master but behaved completely differently.

However, since it was just as awkward for Seung-hyun to run into him, Seung-hyun naturally avoided his gaze and acted as if Seok-hyung wasn't there.

"How is your physical condition?"

"...There's nothing particularly different from usual."

"I see. I'll prepare a meal."

Up to this point, it was a conversation no different from usual. After preparing the meal, they would each go back to their rooms and spend the day quietly.

Was today the day the doctor was coming, or was it tomorrow? He couldn't remember exactly, but there would probably be no conversation except for checking his physical condition and meals until the doctor made a house call.

That's what he thought, but today was a bit strange.

"....."

Seok-hyung, who would always go into his room as if running away after meal preparations were finished, didn't go straight in today and stayed in his seat. Even after Seung-hyun hastily finished his meal while trying not to pay attention, he was still sitting on the living room sofa.

Did he have something to say? Seung-hyun hesitated without returning to his room and asked,

"Do you have something to say?"

"....."

It took quite a bit of courage to say those words, but before long, Seung-hyun, who felt like he had said something unnecessary, stood there awkwardly and took a step. Don't do anything useless and go inside. The moment he was about to go in thinking that, Seok-hyung's answer came back.

"What kind of person were you?"

It was quite an out-of-the-blue question. A personal question he had never expected to hear from Seok-hyung even more so. Seung-hyun was startled and froze for a moment.

"Don't you want to go back to the way you were? Even you wouldn't want to die."

"....."

Seok-hyung, who had never been curious about Seung-hyun himself, asked this question out of the blue, and although Seung-hyun didn't know why, he had a burden in his heart to ignore it and go inside.

He could answer a few words at least. Seung-hyun, who had been hesitating, slowly opened his mouth.

“...I’m already dead anyway.”

“...!”

It must have been quite a surprising answer for Seok-hyung as well, as a slight bewilderment settled on his usually expressionless face. He seemed to have not expected such an answer at all.

“...Were you sick from the beginning?”

Did he think Seung-hyun had passed his illness onto a healthy body? It would have been better if that was the case, as he wouldn’t have felt a sense of unfairness. Seung-hyun shook his head and said,

“It was an accident. Just... an unexpected accident.”

“.....”

Perhaps that was the reason he was calmer than expected when he was told he was terminally ill. Seok-hyung’s brows furrowed slightly. It was a situation that didn’t make sense, but he had already come too far to doubt those words, so Seok-hyung quietly listened to his story without asking.

“...It would have been better to just die cleanly on the spot. At first, I stupidly thought it was fortunate that the time I could live even a little had increased.”

Perhaps it was because of Seok-hyung’s unusual attitude, Seung-hyun unknowingly ended up telling a story he didn’t have to.

It wasn’t a long story anyway, but perhaps because of who the other person was, Seung-hyun tightly shut his mouth before long, feeling embarrassed as if he had rambled on about something unnecessary.

There was no need to talk more. Thinking that and trying to go in, Seok-hyung grabbed Seung-hyun.

“Isn’t it like that now?”

Seung-hyun, who didn’t immediately understand what he was asking because the silence had been long, reflected on what he had said. Asking if he no longer thought it was fortunate to be alive now.

“...It would have been better not to know.”

“.....”

“You might think it’s an ungrateful thing to say, but yes. Now... I think it would have been nice if there was someone by your side who could live life fiercely, not me.”

So I’m really sorry to you. Seung-hyun swallowed those words and smiled bitterly.

“.....”

Seok-hyung didn’t answer and just stared down at the table. The not-so-long conversation ended like that, and with no more answers coming back, Seung-hyun returned to his room and picked up the book he had been reading, trying not to look at the drawer.

The letters didn’t properly enter his eyes, but he had to do something to pass the time. As he was skimming through the letters without knowing what the content was, there was a knock on the door.

“I’m coming in.”

Today’s Seok-hyung was really strange. Unlike usual, he didn’t avoid Seung-hyun, and his oddly peaceful appearance was only unfamiliar.

However, they weren’t in a relationship to acknowledge that change, so Seung-hyun only slightly avoided Seok-hyung’s gaze without saying much.

“I think I’ll have to leave for a bit to go somewhere.”

“...Okay.”

He didn’t know where he was going, but there was no need to ask, and they weren’t in a relationship to interfere, so he just needed to keep it in mind.

“I won’t be gone for very long. Please contact me if there’s any problem.”

Seok-hyung, who bowed his head in greeting, made eye contact with Seung-hyun. How long had it been since he properly looked into those eyes? Seung-hyun blankly stared at those eyes and nodded.

‘Did something happen?’

It was clearly different from usual. That appearance of talking to him calmly without avoiding his gaze was unfamiliar. Did something happen that could cause a change of heart?

‘Well, I may stay in this house all day, but it’s not like I know everything about Seok-hyung’s day.’

Seok-hyung looked at Seung-hyun, who had nodded, for a moment, then closed the door and left. There was the sound of moving luggage outside, and soon the sound of the door opening and closing was heard.

If it was just leaving the house for a bit, nothing would happen during that time, but it was a bit startling for Seok-hyung, who had been taking care of him as if something might happen even without being able to make eye contact with Seung-hyun, to suddenly go out.

‘...Could he be plotting something else...?’

Seung-hyun, who had frowned with a bad feeling, soon returned to his original expression. Whatever he does, since Seung-hyun would meet his end in this peaceful prison, wouldn’t it be fine as long as it doesn’t reach his ears?

‘It might even be a good thing. It could be an opportunity to completely lose attachment.’

Judging from last night’s call, Jae-young, stupidly enough, seemed to have not been able to shake off his lingering feelings for Seung-hyun yet. Since he was an upright and kind person, he might want to hear from Seung-hyun directly again.

Since Seung-hyun himself, who had given Jae-young a harsh answer, was also just as foolish to be happy when he received a call from him, it seemed like they were actually well-suited for each other.

‘No. I decided not to think like that.’

Seung-hyun shook his head and looked out the window. The scenery of a warm spring day with flowers in full bloom was sparkling.

‘If it was home, I would have put a rocking chair by the window and leisurely enjoyed the scenery.’

It was difficult to appreciate the scenery unless he turned his head to look at the window due to the ambiguous location. Seung-hyun, who missed his original home for a trivial reason, thought about going out to the garden but soon gave up.

Autumn, winter, and then spring. It was the third season he was spending as Han Seung-hyun. It was unbelievable that it had already been almost a year since he started living a new life, although there were times he couldn't remember how time had passed because he had let it flow meaninglessly.

'Will I be able to see summer?'

However, there was one season he hadn't seen yet. Summer, it wasn't a season he particularly liked because it was hot and humid. Since he was just enduring because he didn't have the courage to end his life himself, he didn't even feel like he wanted to survive until summer.

It was just that as soon as he thought of summer, the person who came to mind was the one he least wanted to think about.

Seung-hyun, who had become bitter recalling Jae-young, who had said it would be nice to go to the villa in the US together in the summer with a face that showed he was excited just by talking about it, and himself who had imagined Jae-young happily cutting through the water under the summer sun, although not showing it, covered the window with the curtain.

"....."

How long had it been like that? Seung-hyun, who had been sitting on the bed in the darkened room, raised his head at the sound of a car coming from outside.

'How much time has passed while I was spacing out?'

He had no idea how much time had passed because he had even drawn the curtains. When he slightly opened the curtain, the sun was still shining brightly.

'I guess he was going to be back soon. Well, he's not someone to leave me alone for long.'

He thought Seok-hyung would come back soon because something might happen, but it was a much faster return than expected. He had thought it wasn't a big deal, but somehow the footsteps entering the house felt unusually hurried unlike usual.

'Did something happen? No, he's not someone to come in this hurriedly. Is it someone other than Seok-hyung?'

Seung-hyun was recalling if today was the day the doctor was coming, but he realized there was no reason for the doctor to come in this hurriedly even if it was the doctor, so he thought it was strange.

However, that question was solved before long. The moment the owner of the footsteps, who had hurriedly opened the door and almost ran across the living room, opened the door to Seung-hyun's room, Seung-hyun thought this time for sure he must be dreaming.

"....."

"Ha, ha..."

Because the person who was looking at him while taking deep breaths had the face of the one he had been trying his hardest not to think of until just now.