

I Became a Villainous Character with a Limited Lifespan - Episode 121 - 130

Episode 121

Looking for Seung-hyun without any information or a proper channel to obtain information was only a difficult task.

At least he tried asking his trustworthy friends, but without being able to properly explain the situation, it was only dragging on.

He felt like he was finally realizing how comfortably and carefree he had lived his life until now. He regretted living without knowing that ability and effort were needed to protect what was precious.

Still, as a result of struggling for several days, he fortunately found traces of Seung-hyun. More precisely, he discovered traces of Seok-hyung.

It was news that Seok-hyung's car had been spotted in a city a bit outside of Seoul. Although he couldn't track it to the destination, there was something he could infer from just that.

'It's out of the blue, but it's a good place for recuperation. And... I heard the professor who is close with Professor Kim has been going there on business trips recently.'

The story he heard from Wonho, the information about that doctor he had found out after asking around. There was no evidence that the patient that doctor became in charge of was Seung-hyun, but the fact that the place Seok-hyung's car was discovered and the doctor's business trip destination overlapped was a circumstance that couldn't be ignored.

Seung-hyun's cell phone, which had been out of reach all along, finally turned off again, perhaps because the battery had died from the repeated calls, but it was good just that it had been turned on, that the signal had lasted until the end.

'At least he didn't block me.'

Just that fact alone made it seem like there was still a chance left, and although he thought he was being foolish, he didn't care.

He wanted to meet Seung-hyun as soon as possible. He had to confirm the reality of those rumors about his health condition that he didn't want to believe.

He wanted to see Seung-hyun even if the end of this relationship was different from what he hoped for. While following news about Seung-hyun like that, a call came from a contact he had saved recently but had never exchanged calls with.

“.....”

It was Seok-hyung's contact, which he had found out not long ago. It wasn't a particularly secret number, so it was easy to find the contact information, but if he hastily contacted him, he would be blocked right away, so he had decided to postpone contacting him until the last moment.

'How should I interpret this call?'

Jae-young was briefly lost in thought, but the thought didn't last long. Whether he answered this call now or not, it was a situation he would have to face someday.

Let's find out now. Jae-young calmed himself down and opened his mouth after answering the phone.

“...What is this about?”

—It seems you know who I am, so there's no need for useless conversation.

Maybe he should have pretended not to know. He had a belated regret, but it was meaningless. Jae-young said, trying not to show his surprise,

“We're in the same boat in not having given each other our contact information.”

—I know what you've been up to, Ju Jae-young. You're quite unskilled at this kind of thing.

Unlike Jae-young, who was pretending to be calm, the indifferent voice without a hint of wavering made him feel embarrassed. Jae-young answered after catching his breath,

“...I'm not trying to hide it, so it doesn't matter.”

—.....

Jae-young tensed up a bit, waiting for a reply. He had retorted out of a desire not to lose, but if Seok-hyung moved Seung-hyun's whereabouts like this, it would be troublesome for him.

The situation was already slow in finding information, so he was concerned about the rumors regarding Seung-hyun's health condition to start over from the beginning.

'It shouldn't be like that, but.'

Although he wanted to deny it and was trying not to think about it until he confirmed it, if by any chance those rumors, the worst-case scenario he heard from Wonho, were reality, he had to meet him quickly before it was too late.

'He'll try to hide it. Like last time. But there must be a reason he contacted me, how should I respond...?'

—I will tell you where he is.

Jae-young, who had been agonizing and preparing for what kind of words would come back, froze, unable to answer at the unexpected words.

Did he hear wrong? No. Was there some ulterior motive? It was too strange of a situation to take at face value. Wasn't he the person who had prevented him from meeting Seung-hyun until just a while ago?

Thinking there must be some hidden intention, Jae-young hesitated without hastily answering. Seok-hyung, who easily understood the reason for the silence, said,

—I understand your suspicion, but there's nothing to lose anyway, right? With your method, who knows when you'll be able to find the proper destination.

It was a correct statement, although his pride was hurt. He had only just found out the area presumed to be where Seung-hyun was. Moreover, since Seok-hyung already knew what Jae-young was doing, there were countless ways to interfere with Jae-young even without preparing such a trap.

—...I no longer have the confidence to face him. Although I never wanted to entrust him to you even a bit... I have no choice but to acknowledge it now.

“Acknowledge what?”

—...I said something unnecessary. Don't mind it. I will send you the address in a message. He's not someone who should be left alone for long, so it would be best for you to depart as quickly as possible.

They were all incomprehensible words. However, since he wasn't in a position to be picky, Jae-young hurriedly started preparing to leave.

“...Why did you suddenly change your mind?”

Somehow, he had a strange conviction that Seok-hyung wasn't lying. But if his words were true, there were many more strange points. What was the reason for the sudden change of heart? To the question that couldn't hide the suspicious tone, an answer without hesitation came back.

—...Because I can no longer deny that the person I have to protect is gone.

“...?”

Jae-young tried to ask again at the cryptic words, but Seok-hyung's words were faster.

—I end up saying useless things. I don't think I have any more obligation to explain, so I will hang up now. I hope there will be no reason to contact you again.

This time, the call was cut off before the question could even be asked. Jae-young first grabbed his car keys at the message that arrived soon after.

‘I have to confirm it first. There are many things I'm curious about, but there's something more important than that.’

Seok-hyung's whims or anguish didn't matter. The address written in the message was neither close nor very far. If he left right away, he would be able to arrive within two hours at the latest.

Jae-young's footsteps as he left the house without even being able to change clothes were unusually urgent.

“.....”

And Seok-hyung on the other side of the disconnected call couldn't put down his cell phone for a long time. He had already packed his luggage, and there was no way to take back the message he had already sent, so it was really over.

He thought he could always stay by Seung-hyun's side. Even if Seung-hyun acted differently from the one he knew, even if he was uncomfortable with him.

No matter what happened, he thought he could endure it if those eyes and that voice were directed at him even for a moment. But it seemed he had overestimated himself too much.

It would have been nice if he had never known how painful it was to see those eyes that were always unshakable become a mess, to hear the tears and sobbing sounds that he thought he would never encounter in his life.

He was weaker than he had thought, and the familiar face and voice now only felt unfamiliar. So he decided to leave. Because the more he was with Seung-hyun, the more he missed that face he wanted to see, and he felt like he would crumble.

There was no need to even tell Jae-young about Seung-hyun's whereabouts, but the reason for his whim was probably because he felt sorry for the current Seung-hyun.

That completely unfamiliar voice, the face he no longer had the courage to face again, was always sunk in melancholy. Because he was turning a blind eye to that appearance that was quite different from "Han Seung-hyun," he couldn't properly see it, but the face he faced for the last time after deciding to leave somehow looked younger and more fragile than he had thought.

So this was the first and last favor he was bestowing upon him. Perhaps it was also his way of apologizing for dragging him around on his own whims.

"...You were someone who didn't know how to rest, so I wonder if you'll find it unfamiliar now."

Seok-hyung, who belatedly acknowledged that there was not a single trace left of the person he loved in that fragile and weak person, smiled bitterly. Only then did he realize that person was gone from this world.

‘There’s nothing I hate more than crying. Whether it’s me crying or someone else crying, it’s the same. So don’t show me such a pathetic appearance either.’

After hearing those words, he had never cried. Since he considered “Han Seung-hyun’s” values to be his own values, he thought his tear glands had completely dried up as if he had never cried from the beginning.

“.....”

A single teardrop, which no one would hate to see anymore, fell to the floor with a plop. However, Seok-hyung, who soon lifted his head as if nothing had happened, started the engine of the stopped car again.

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“.....”

To Seung-hyun, who didn’t even realize that Seok-hyung’s traces had disappeared, this situation felt unreal. Is this a dream? Am I having this dream because I miss him so much but know I can’t see him?

But the loneliness he felt just a moment ago was too vivid for that. The haggard face of Jae-young, who was panting in front of him, didn’t exist in Seung-hyun’s memory.

“.....”

Neither Seung-hyun nor Jae-young could say anything for a long time and just looked at each other. Because the face of the other person they were seeing for the first time in a while was so haggard.

It seemed like there were quite a few things they wanted to say, but the moment they saw that face, they forgot everything.

“Why, no. How...?”

Seung-hyun was the first to open his mouth. He thought they would never meet again, so how did he know about this house and come here?

“If Secretary Lee comes...”

“You won’t see Secretary Lee again.”

Jae-young said while catching his breath. For some reason, he will no longer look for Seung-hyun. He couldn't understand the reason, but that one thing he could be sure of.

The tired and somewhat relieved voice told him that Seok-hyung would not return.

"Did you do something to him?"

Seung-hyun, who couldn't know such circumstances, hesitated and asked. Does he think I did something to Secretary Lee? Jae-young let out a hollow laugh and said,

"I don't know what you're thinking, but I didn't lay a hand on him. Secretary Lee personally contacted me and told me the address of this house."

"Why would Secretary Lee do such a thing...?"

Although Jae-young wasn't the type to lie, it was a situation that was completely incomprehensible.

"That's what I want to ask. He said he no longer had the confidence to face you, so what happened that made Secretary Lee say such a thing?"

"....."

Seung-hyun recalled Seok-hyung's face from a moment ago. A somewhat relieved face, speaking to him differently from usual.

It was Seok-hyung who couldn't let go of him in the end even though he knew the current Seung-hyun wasn't "Han Seung-hyun." His lack of confidence to face Seung-hyun anymore was probably because he could no longer deny that the crumbling Seung-hyun was a completely different person from the director he knew.

But there was no need to even tell Jae-young his whereabouts. Seung-hyun remained silent, still unable to escape the question.

Jae-young was also just as curious about what had happened between Seok-hyung and Seung-hyun, but their situation was more important than that. Jae-young took a step closer to Seung-hyun.

"...Your face has become very gaunt."

A large, warm hand cupped one side of Seung-hyun's cheek. At the warmth he felt for the first time in a long time, Seung-hyun trembled his lips for a moment, almost leaning into that hand.

He thought he shouldn't get involved with him anymore, that it had to be that way. But the moment he saw his face, he was just happy to the point that such determination didn't matter.

"Why did you do this alone, making me sad?"

However, the moment he heard the worried voice, the thought of whether this was a dream returned to reality. He belatedly recalled why he had to avoid Jae-young, why he regretted meeting him so much.

He had never imagined facing each other again in this situation. Moreover, judging from Jae-young's current attitude, although he didn't seem to fully know Seung-hyun's condition, he seemed to have some idea.

He had expected rumors about his physical condition to spread since there was a commotion with Tae-sung, but he didn't know how detailed the content of those rumors were.

Whether it was known as a temporary phenomenon or known in such detail that it couldn't be hidden. After pondering for a moment, Seung-hyun soon lowered his head, thinking it didn't matter anyway.

'It's not something that can be hidden forever anyway, and...'

A face that looked like it would cry at any moment and trembling hands. An attitude as if he had already prepared his heart. Seung-hyun dropped his head at the face that seemed to quickly see through any clumsy lies.

"...How much do you know?"

Seung-hyun gave up hiding and asked. Jae-young, who had been looking at Seung-hyun who couldn't make eye contact for a long time, said,

"I heard that the painkillers at your house are not the kind prescribed to ordinary patients."

"!!"

Seung-hyun's eyes widened at the unexpected answer. He had thought Jae-young would have heard the rumors at most and hadn't anticipated at all that he had found out even before that.

"...It's not..."

Jae-young's hand trembled as he carefully opened his mouth as if asking him to say it wasn't such a serious matter. Although he thought he would directly meet him and hear from him, that it wouldn't be the case, anxiety was deeply rooted in his mind.

The thoughts he had been pushing away, thinking that seeing his face first and talking first were the priorities, engulfed Jae-young the moment he saw Seung-hyun's haggard face, as if they had been waiting.

"Please say something."

The relief of finally meeting him was short-lived, and Jae-young waited for Seung-hyun's answer without being able to say anything. He hoped he would answer that it was nothing serious, that it was an overreaction, but the unanswered response increased Jae-young's anxiety.

Where should he start? Seung-hyun hesitated for a long time and opened his mouth.

"Why did you come? Didn't we agree to end our story there?"

He didn't want to say it. Whether he said it or not, it was equally painful, so he wanted to end it without saying it himself.

It was fine even if he was told he was running away, that he was a coward. Because he was that afraid and didn't want to face this situation where he had to tell his condition himself.

"Why did you come all the way here just to hear something, making a person so..."

The truth was, he knew why Jae-young had looked for him like that, why he kept looking for him again as if nothing had happened even after hearing hurtful words.

Even though he guessed it was for the same reason he had wanted to see Jae-young even though he knew what the better choice was, sharp words kept spilling out.

“...miserable.”

He thought if there had been no Jae-young, if he hadn't become precious to him. If he hadn't known what love was, how desperate it made people, he wouldn't have been this miserable.

His mind was such a mess that he didn't even know the direction of his hatred was wrong, that these words would do no good for either of them.

“You should have just thought ah, this is how it is, this is the end. There are all sorts of strange people, so why did you have to drag it out all the way here?”

With the thought that he could no longer hide it, that he had finally come to face the situation he had wanted to avoid so much, he couldn't raise his head. He just spat out his anger with the wrong destination towards the floor.

“Are you satisfied now?”

An appearance that was even thinner and more unsightly than the last time they met. A voice that was shaking in a mess, putting forth only immediate emotions.

He didn't want to show this side of himself. Even if he became a bad person, he really didn't want to show this shameful appearance.

In the end, even after being caught, the words he said, asking if he was satisfied after seeing him like this, made it even more bitter.

“.....”

He might die soon, no. He will die. Seung-hyun faltered without being able to say those words. Jae-young was not a slow-witted person, and he said he knew what kind of medicine the painkiller Seung-hyun was taking was.

That voice asking him to say it wasn't so, those trembling hands. It was as good as telling him that Jae-young already knew about Seung-hyun's condition, but the words wouldn't easily come out.

“...I regret meeting you, Ju Jae-young. If there was only one moment I could change in my life, I would go back to that day and leave that bar without looking back.”

“Am I such a regrettable moment for Han Seung-hyun?”

Jae-young withdrew his hand and asked. Seung-hyun nodded. Jae-young was the person who made him feel the most diverse emotions in his entire life, which had been unremarkable before he became “Han Seung-hyun,” no, since he became “Han Seung-hyun.”

“Yes.”

The thought crossed his mind that he would regret these words as soon as he turned around, but he didn’t care.

The most lovely moment, the most regrettable moment, the happiest moment, the saddest moment. He was there in every moment with the word “most” attached to it. Seung-hyun smiled without telling him that fact.

“You too, by now, don’t you regret meeting me? What’s so good about me, you should have just...”

“That’s right. Certainly, it might have been better if we hadn’t met.”

Seung-hyun raised his head at the calm answer. That’s what he wanted to hear, he had hoped Jae-young would get angrier and leave him behind. For a moment, he felt a pain as if his heart was sinking.

“...But if I leave Han Seung-hyun like this, I’m sure I’ll regret it even more.”

The eyes he met as he raised his head held a sense of emptiness. Those eyes that always sparkled as if they found Seung-hyun lovely whenever they looked at him now felt so empty it made his heart ache.

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“...I’m fine.”

“Would Han Seung-hyun be able to believe those words?”

“...You’re right. It’s not that I’m fine. But... it’s not serious enough to have such a world-ending face.”

Seung-hyun, who had been staring into those eyes for a long time, lied as if possessed by something. The time he had left was not much, and Jae-young would surely not leave Seung-hyun's side.

In a state where he was already hurt as much as possible, a complete mess. If he couldn't leave anyway, wouldn't this be better?

"...If you wait just 3 months, I'll be able to have surgery. It's just that... my condition isn't good right now, so I'm recuperating for the time being."

"!!"

Once he started lying, the words came out so easily it was ridiculous. He himself didn't understand with what mindset he said such things, to the point it was an absurd lie.

However, it seemed like the current Jae-young would believe those words. Perhaps, with the thought of wanting to believe, his judgment would be clouded and he would believe it without questioning it back and forth.

That prediction was exactly right, and a slightly hopeful look returned to Jae-young's face.

"...I didn't want to show this side of myself. So..."

So he just hid, he said. Even to himself, it wasn't a very credible statement, but it was good enough if he could buy time with this lie even for a moment.

He didn't want Jae-young to stay by his side out of sympathy or to spend each day out of a sense of duty.

Even if he had to deceive himself and each other, he wanted to spend the remaining time without being sad. It wouldn't last long, but he wanted to pretend like nothing was happening even for just a few days.

"Why are you having such foolish thoughts?"

Jae-young's voice was trembling a little. As expected, it seemed he had sensed Seung-hyun's situation in one corner of his heart.

"Such strange thoughts..."

Surely this lie wouldn't last long, but it was enough if he could buy time even for a moment. Seung-hyun hesitated and continued,

"Secretary Lee must have thought he should take over my work while I rest. Since I hadn't contacted him after quitting work, he thought that was my intention..."

"I'm glad."

Before he could even finish speaking, Jae-young hugged Seung-hyun. Even though he couldn't see his face, he could feel how tense and relieved he was.

The sound of his rapidly beating heart rang loudly in his ears. Seung-hyun quietly listened to that heartbeat for a moment.

That lie, which wouldn't last long, brought a brief peace.

That day, the two returned to Seung-hyun's familiar house. Although the house he had been staying in wasn't bad for recuperation, Seung-hyun disliked that house.

'Is it because I don't have any good memories while staying here?'

Was it because all the memories while staying in this house were only dark ones? The refreshing scenery outside the window felt suffocating, and he didn't want to stay here for long.

If he returned to this house that was already known, some bothersome guests might visit, but he didn't care.

'They're not tactless or stupid, so they'll notice before long.'

On the way back, Jae-young might have also realized something was strange. He too would unconsciously try to bury it, pretending not to know.

He knew it was a peace with limits. So he wanted to spend this time as meaningfully as possible even a little.

"Do you not have to go back?"

"I don't have anything to do anyway. I'm half unemployed, aren't I? I won't have to show my face at home for a while."

Jae-young said lightly. But those words weren't true.

It was because Madam Ju had noticed Jae-young's strange behavior. She, who found out that he, who had lived his whole life without wanting or longing for anything, was moving busily as if being chased by something, contacted Jae-young several times.

It was even more so because he didn't have the leisure to even pretend to avoid her. He would have to see her soon since he couldn't avoid it forever, but Jae-young looked at Seung-hyun, pretending nothing was going on.

"Don't worry..."

"How have you been... all this time?"

Seung-hyun asked, hesitating a bit. Even without asking, it was clear from his slightly thinned face and overly calm demeanor that it hadn't been a good time. But Seung-hyun, who changed the subject because he felt like this peace, which was already difficult to last long, would quickly shatter if he talked about himself.

"...I can't say I've been well."

Jae-young said, shrugging his shoulders. It was a light tone, but a biting remark. Seung-hyun fiddled with his phone that he hadn't turned on yet and said,

"You should have just lived as if nothing had happened. There must be many people you can meet and want to meet."

"I tried, but it didn't work out well."

If he could have done that, why wouldn't he have? Jae-young recalled how he had been after his conversation with Seung-hyun had ended in a mess.

He thought he had been busy trying to erase thoughts of Seung-hyun by doing something, but the days were so meaningless that he could hardly remember how he had spent them. He had just been meeting people and

drinking out of obligation. He had been wasting time just to avoid thinking about anything.

"If I could have done that, I would have done it a long time ago."

"...You should have just done that."

Seung-hyun muttered softly. Although he was glad Jae-young had finally come looking for him, and had decided to spend the remaining time together even if it was just a little, his wicked greed kept raising its head, contrary to being content with that.

'When in fact, I would be just as miserable if he did that.'

Seung-hyun had a self-deprecating thought and lowered his head. To think the only things he could say were like this. It was foolish.

"...You must be hungry. Is there anything you want to eat? Since the house has been empty for a long time, there won't be any ingredients either."

Jae-young didn't answer and changed the subject. He opened the refrigerator, checked the empty inside as expected, and closed the refrigerator door.

"I'll go out for a bit and come back. Can you stay alone?"

"I'm not a child either."

"It's because I'm anxious to leave a sick person alone."

"...It won't take long anyway, so that much is fine."

Seung-hyun nodded. He didn't dislike Jae-young's attitude of treating him like a child. As he connected his phone to the charger, Jae-young glanced at the powered-off phone.

"Then I'll be back in a bit. The phone... will you turn it on now?"

Seung-hyun fiddled with his phone that hadn't turned on yet for no reason and nodded. When he briefly turned on his phone, he had checked most of the accumulated contacts, but he hadn't checked how many contacts had come since the calls started coming in.

"I'll be right back."

He also felt like he had hurriedly left, unable to overcome the awkward atmosphere. But since it was the same for Seung-hyun, who was not yet used to this situation, he didn't deliberately show it and just waited for his phone to charge.

Before long, enough battery was charged for the power to come on. Seung-hyun long-pressed the power button on his phone.

As soon as the power came on, what he saw was a frighteningly accumulated number of missed calls. It seemed he had kept calling until the power went off.

He couldn't even fathom how long the soundless and vibration-off phone had been glowing inside the drawer, how Jae-young's heart had felt during that long time he had been holding the phone.

'Why did he have to meet someone like me?'

It would have been nice if he had met someone he could spend a long time with, someone a bit better and kinder than himself, who would suit Jae-young well.

'That's right. Certainly, it might have been better if we hadn't met.'

It was a fact he had always thought about, but hearing it from Jae-young's mouth made it feel a bit more real. Naturally, he too would be hurt and get angry, but he had been thinking only of his own pain and hadn't been able to think about it.

'And yet, he can't leave my side, he's become similar even in the foolish parts.'

If they couldn't leave each other anyway, he wanted to make at least a few good memories in the remaining time, but that didn't seem as simple as he thought either.

Despite the surprisingly accumulated missed calls, not a single message had come. It was in contrast to when he had turned on his phone before and had received various messages.

Somehow, he could see Jae-young staring at the message window, constantly agonizing over what to say, writing and erasing words over and over again.

'If you've vowed to stay by my side, at least say something nice. You can't even do that.'

Seung-hyun, who had been looking back at his own appearance a little while ago, let out a deep sigh again. He thought he had become more sensitive since his physical condition had worsened, but he didn't know he was this pathetic because he had no one to talk to.

'When he comes back, let's not be picky this time. I'll have to tell him properly about the illness someday, but... even if it's just a week, no. Even if it's just a few days...'

Seung-hyun turned off his phone screen with that resolution. However, contrary to that resolution, the subtle cohabitation of the two continued to creak just like the beginning.

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The next few days passed quite quietly. There were clearly many things they wanted to say and ask, but when they actually faced each other, the words didn't come out easily.

Perhaps they were instinctively avoiding conversation for fear of facing the reality they wanted to deny.

'We don't have much time, we can't spend it so meaninglessly like this.'

That night, Seung-hyun thought about how to spend the remaining time. And when to end this meaningless lie. His physical condition wasn't very good even now, but he was well enough to take light walks.

'It's not strange for your health to worsen to the point you can't move at any time. It would be best to only take light walks.'

The words of the attending physician came to mind. He was probably talking about lightly basking in the sun in the garden in front of the house, but it was fine even if he had to stay cooped up in the house for a few days after one outing.

'Anyway, it's the same now that I barely leave the room.'

Because it's spring. The flowers are in full bloom, the weather is warm, and it's a pretty day in many ways, so maybe he could make at least one day that the precious person he had only hurt until now could remember without pain.

"It's the time when the spring flowers are in full bloom."

"That's right. It's the height of the cherry blossom festival season."

"Do you like flowers?"

At Seung-hyun's sudden question, Jae-young hesitated for a moment and nodded. He didn't go to crowded places often because he sometimes ran into people he knew, but he still went to see the flowers for a few days every spring.

"I feel stuffy just staying at home. The weather is nice, and the streets will be pretty at this time..."

"No."

Jae-young firmly cut off Seung-hyun's words. He could tell what he was trying to say without even having to listen.

It wasn't a particularly special or difficult suggestion, but Jae-young objected with an overly serious face.

He thought what problem could arise from just going out for a day, but seeing his thin body and sometimes staggering as if dizzy even while walking inside the house, he was bound to become conservative.

Moreover, although it was spring, it wasn't very warm yet the day after it rained. He was worried he might catch a cold if he went out for no reason.

"You were dizzy even while coming to the dining table in the morning, what if you go outside and your condition suddenly worsens?"

"At that time, I was still a bit sleepy..."

Seung-hyun made an awkward excuse and looked out the window. The brightly shining sunlight made the weather look really nice.

Moreover, his physical condition wasn't too bad today. The attending physician who visited the day before had also said there were no

abnormalities, and although he felt a bit dizzy, he felt like he would gain energy if he moved around a bit.

“It’s not good to stay inside too much either. The doctor also said light walks would be okay.”

“...Is that true?”

Jae-young said with a doubtful face. Well, not moving too much wasn’t good either. Moreover, if the doctor said it was okay, it would be better to follow the expert’s words rather than his own, who was a layman when it came to medicine.

“Still, it rained yesterday, so the weather is chillier than usual. When the weather warms up a bit more...”

“I say that because I feel stuffy.”

At Seung-hyun’s words, Jae-young stopped talking and looked at him. Come to think of it, he hadn’t gone out even once since returning. He thought he could feel stuffy.

‘...Yeah, after tomorrow passes, it will be the weekend, so there will be a lot of people. It might be better to go out quietly for a bit...’

Although there was no rain forecast for the next few days, the spring rain would start falling again soon, and after the rain passed, the beautifully bloomed flowers would also shed their petals in the rainwater.

Moreover, it was a rare occasion for Seung-hyun to speak first since returning. It was also the first time he had made a request.

“Still, for no reason...”

“I just want to go out quietly and enjoy the pretty scenery. ...We’ve been staying inside the whole time since returning, haven’t we?”

He didn’t want to spend the remaining time so meaninglessly. Once he told the truth about his physical condition, the real overprotection would begin. Since he wouldn’t be able to go outside then, he wanted to go on a last walk before that.

“...And there’s something I want to tell you after we come back.”

Seung-hyun said, hesitating a bit. Feeling something unusual about his demeanor, Jae-young asked Seung-hyun, who couldn't make eye contact.

"Can't you just tell me now?"

He seemed to have instinctively sensed a crisis from the slightly anxious face and unusual atmosphere. Seung-hyun firmly shook his head.

"If I was going to do that, I would have told you right away. I just want a change of pace. We used to go out often, didn't we?"

Seung-hyun said, recalling a past that seemed to have become a very old memory. When he first ran into him at the hotel, he had been dumbfounded thinking what kind of strange person this was.

'But that was also the most fun time.'

He missed the time he had spent being dragged around as Jae-young wanted, even though he thought it was bothersome. Jae-young must have also thought of something similar, as he eventually nodded after agonizing for a long time.

"Okay. But you have to tell me right away if you feel even a bit unwell."

"I understand."

"Don't be stubborn for no reason, if you're really tired even a little bit..."

"It's not like I want to get sick on purpose either, so don't worry for nothing."

Seung-hyun answered with a slight smile. It was a faint smile, but for Jae-young, it was Seung-hyun's smile he was seeing for the first time in a very long time.

"...It might get cold, so make sure to bring an outer garment."

In the end, words of consent fell from Jae-young's mouth. An afternoon with not a single cloud in the sky, the first outing in a long time felt a bit exciting.

It had been a long time since he had worn outdoor clothes. It was really a long time since he had worn light home wear even when returning to this house.

Seung-hyun, who found his reflection in the mirror a bit awkward, smiled shyly and picked up the medicine bottle on the table.

‘After we come back, that’s when I really have to tell him.’

It was something he couldn’t hide forever. It weighed on his mind that the person who had been so kind and playful was gradually getting tired, and they had come to call each other regrets.

Nevertheless, if they couldn’t leave each other’s side in the end, it would be deception to hide it until the end.

“Shall we go?”

“Wait a moment.”

Jae-young properly closed Seung-hyun’s collar and put his hand on his face to check his body temperature. When the warm hand touched his lukewarm face, he felt an inexplicable sense of stability.

“You have to tell me right away if you feel even a bit unwell. I heard the flu is going around these days...”

“I got it, so stop nagging and let’s go out. The day will be over at this rate.”

Seung-hyun pushed away Jae-young’s hand that was endlessly nagging and opened the door. Jae-young made a slightly displeased face, but soon held the door open and followed Seung-hyun out.

He was very worried, but Jae-young didn’t dislike going out for the first time in a while either. Above all, he liked that the atmosphere, where they had been looking at each other for days not knowing what to say, had become a bit lighter, and the heads that used to awkwardly turn away when their eyes met now moved naturally.

He didn’t know what it was that Seung-hyun said he would tell after this outing was over, and it might be the calm before the storm, but he felt like he wanted to be dragged along as Seung-hyun led, even if it was just for today.

“Is there anywhere you want to go?”

“There’s no place I particularly want to go, but... I don’t like places that are too close. Since we’re out anyway, I want to go somewhere that feels like we’re really outside.”

Not too close, not too far, a place where they could see flowers and there weren’t many people. After pondering for a moment, Jae-young thought of a suitable place and grabbed the steering wheel.

“It’s not a place with a festival atmosphere, but there’s a place suitable for viewing flowers. It’s not very far, and since it’s a weekday today, there won’t be many people.”

“Then let’s go there.”

The destination was set smoothly, and Jae-young started to drive the car. In the car that had become quiet again, Seung-hyun, who was sitting in the passenger seat and fiddling with his phone for no reason, spoke first.

“The weather is really nice today.”

A clear sky without a single cloud, a moderate temperature that was neither hot nor cold. It was the optimal weather for going out. Jae-young, who looked up at the sky for a moment, said,

“It might get a bit cold at night, but it should be fine while the sun is out.”

Seung-hyun felt bitter that he seemed to have become a caregiver, only thinking about the temperature in case he caught a cold rather than the sunny sky.

“That much is fine. It’s not like I don’t have an outer garment, and if I wear this too, I’ll be hot rather than cold.”

“Still...”

“Coming outside, I definitely feel good. Is it because I’ve been seeing the same scenery every day and came out? The wind feels refreshing too.”

Seung-hyun lowered the window and closed his eyes as if feeling good in the cool breeze. Jae-young, who was about to nag, stopped thinking it might be too much and turned his head.

‘Yeah, he seems to be in a good mood.’

Jae-young also wanted to see this sight he hadn't seen in a long time for a long time, so he didn't say anything more than that.

Without noticing that the corners of his mouth had lifted a bit, Jae-young thought it was a day with really nice sunshine.

Episode 125

The place they arrived at after driving a little over 30 minutes was a mountain road not too far from the city. The street with flowers in full bloom was dazzlingly beautiful.

Jae-young, who parked the car in a nearby parking lot, brought Seung-hyun's outer garment for him. It seemed to be a place that many tourists visited, with a neatly maintained path and slightly rustic photo spots catching the eye.

"It's pretty. I could see the flowers blooming a bit from home too, so I knew spring had come, but..."

Seung-hyun muttered as he walked along the path surrounded by flowers. Although he had come out wanting to make even one more good memory, the scenery was so pretty that he momentarily forgot such a purpose.

Perhaps he had been feeling more suffocated by living indoors than he had thought. He had thought it was just a bit stuffy, but seeing the path that stretched on endlessly, he felt refreshed.

Seeing Seung-hyun's back walking far ahead without realizing it, Jae-young reflected a little, thinking he had nagged him not to come out for nothing when he liked it so much.

'Both Seung-hyun and I were trapped in that house the whole time.'

No one had forced it, and he wasn't doing anything special by staying inside, but Jae-young had been cooped up in there.

It was even more so because of the strangely awkward atmosphere and the discomfort that kept raising its head. He knew they couldn't stay like that forever, and Jae-young also thought they needed a proper conversation soon, but he had been putting it off because he couldn't muster up the courage.

Until just a few months ago, it had felt cozier than his own home, but he had been pretending not to know that the unchanged house felt barren. But seeing Seung-hyun excited about the outing for the first time in a while, he smiled again as if nothing had happened.

“Do you like it that much?”

“I didn’t know I wanted to come out this much either... Yes, I like it. The weather is nice too. And...”

Seung-hyun turned around and made eye contact with Jae-young, who was holding his cardigan. The hair that shimmered in the sunlight and the face that smiled following Seung-hyun were as pretty as a picture.

‘If only it was a sight I could see for a bit longer.’

“The flowers are pretty too. There’s a good number of people. You know a nice place.”

“There aren’t usually that many people on weekdays. On weekends, we won’t be able to enjoy it this leisurely though.”

Fortunately, Jae-young didn’t notice the bitterness that flashed across Seung-hyun’s face. The two, who had matched their walking pace at some point, continued their conversation naturally as if they had never been awkward.

“Do you come here often?”

“I like going around a lot to begin with. I found out about this place by chance and come sometimes when I think of it. Also to watch the fireworks.”

“Fireworks?”

“I’m not sure exactly where they do it, but I see it once in a while.”

There seemed to be a stadium or something at the foot of the mountain. It seemed they held events there from time to time. Fireworks, it was something he wasn’t usually interested in, but today there was something he thought of.

‘When we first went on a trip. We played with sparklers on the beach.’

It was so fun playing with just a single stick. Although he couldn’t go back to that day, couldn’t he at least feel that way?

“It would be nice if they did it today too.”

“They usually do it on weekends, so they probably won’t do it today.”

Is that so? Seung-hyun clicked his tongue, thinking it was a bit unfortunate. It was fine since that wasn’t the purpose of coming here anyway.

“A snow-covered street is pretty too, but a path you can only see during this season is also nice.”

“I guess you like spring.”

“I haven’t really thought about it...”

The season he liked the most. He didn’t like winter much because he disliked shoveling snow, but he hadn’t really considered his likes and dislikes for other seasons. Still, there were definitely no good memories of summer when he would sweat just from moving a little and spending time in a house without air conditioning.

He liked seasons with moderate temperatures like spring or fall. If he had to choose between the two, spring seemed a bit better because it felt like something was starting.

“I suppose so. I think that’s the case.”

“What do you mean you think that’s the case?”

Jae-young smiled slightly at the unsure answer. Seung-hyun asked Jae-young,

“You like summer, right?”

“Have I mentioned that before?”

“No, you just seem like you would.”

Seung-hyun said with a chuckle. He felt like he would know even without asking. He was a person who suited summer very well.

It would be nice if he could see him shining under his favorite season. Seung-hyun thought that and shook his head.

'No. Let's not think meaningless thoughts. We decided to only think about today.'

"You said you wanted to go to the villa in the US during summer. I thought it must be because you have many good memories."

"Ah."

He had said something like that. What had Seung-hyun said back then?

'Did he say it was hard to take a long flight?'

It wasn't something to think lightly of, but he might have unconsciously not thought deeply about it. Maybe he wanted to believe it was nothing.

"After the flowers fall, the weather will gradually get hotter, and the season you like will come."

"In the summer... It would be nice if your health improves a bit. It would be too much this summer, but so that we can go somewhere next summer."

"That would be nice."

Would there be a summer for him? Even if there was, it probably wouldn't be as enjoyable a season as he thought. Seung-hyun nodded, thinking that.

"They said there are fireworks at 7:30 today, let's watch them before going back."

"7:30? Isn't the timing a bit awkward?"

"We can kill some time nearby and then go."

While walking slowly, Seung-hyun pricked up his ears after hearing the conversation of passersby. He hadn't particularly searched for it, but he could see it today by chance. Wouldn't this also be fate in a way?

"...Do you want to watch it before going back?"

After the passersby who had passed by were far enough away that they couldn't hear the two's voices, Seung-hyun hesitated for a moment and asked. Although they would be going home later than expected, since they

had come out anyway, wouldn't it be good to enjoy a nice view before leaving?

"No."

However, Jae-young firmly rejected Seung-hyun's suggestion. The answer was sharp enough to be embarrassing, so Seung-hyun momentarily froze in surprise, forgetting to even take a step.

"It's still chilly at night. Especially since it rained yesterday. Moreover, this is a mountain, so the temperature is lower... What if you catch a cold?"

"It's still spring anyway. I brought a cardigan too."

"There's no harm in being careful, right? You're not... okay yet."

Just because it was spring didn't mean there were always warm days. The greater the daily temperature range and the more capricious the daily weather, the more likely it was to affect one's health.

He didn't want to risk such variables. When Jae-young refused without any hesitation, Seung-hyun tried to persuade him, saying,

"I know my physical condition better than anyone. That much is fine. I'm not a patient who can't even move, and I won't end up like that from that much."

"I don't want to gamble with Seung-hyun's health. Besides, what's so great about just fireworks? You can see that anytime. You don't have to overdo it and watch it today..."

It wasn't that Seung-hyun didn't know why Jae-young was against it. However, the words "just today" didn't really resonate with Seung-hyun.

Since he didn't know what would happen tomorrow, every day was a series of variables for Seung-hyun. He didn't know when a day when his condition was as good as today would come again, and this outing with Jae-young could be the last.

So even if he seemed like a strange person, he wanted to be stubborn and see it. Seung-hyun said in a calm voice,

"Doesn't it seem like fate? That they happen to have it on the day we came, that we can see a beautiful sky."

“That’s not really...”

“Do you remember when we met in Busan? You chased after me too, making absurd excuses like being an employee.”

“.....”

For Jae-young too, that day was a day he wanted to go back to just by recalling it. It was something he had done thinking it would be a fun memory in its own way even if he was rejected, but it was surprising that he ended up falling for it more than he thought.

‘If I could go back to that time.’

Then would he have gone all the way to Busan chasing Seung-hyun? Jae-young, who had been thinking for a moment, shook his head. Although he couldn’t say it to Seung-hyun, he probably would have made the same choice even if he had to experience the same frustration as now.

‘Is he regretting it? He probably is.’

However, Seung-hyun, who had no way of knowing that feeling, guessed Jae-young’s silence was regret about that time and felt a bit bitter, biting his unnecessary lips. Ignoring the stinging heart, Seung-hyun broke the silence first.

“At that time, I remembered playing with fireworks at the sea. We had so much fun with just that tiny cheap sparkler. Wouldn’t it be even more enjoyable to see proper fireworks?”

At the soft words filled with earnestness, Jae-young couldn’t refuse right away this time and fell into thought. The two people who had stopped in the middle of the street with spring flowers in full bloom stayed in that spot for a long time.

Episode 126

In the end, Jae-young lost to Seung-hyun again this time. Jae-young always became weak in front of him, but when he talked about memories that were precious to him too, not anything else, there was no way he could refuse.

Still, he was just as worried, so Jae-young followed Seung-hyun with a displeased face while holding Seung-hyun's cardigan in one hand.

'What's so great about just fireworks?'

He could see that at his hotel's summer event too. Rather than the small-scale fireworks done in a place like this, he could spend time in the comfort of a room's terrace without worrying about the cold weather, watching more spectacular fireworks than at a small park in the middle of a mountain trail.

"I'm excited."

It was a situation he didn't like. However, he couldn't take back his words now that he had said he would, and Seung-hyun looked unusually excited, so Jae-young could only follow him without saying anything.

But perhaps because Jae-young's silence without saying anything weighed on his mind, Seung-hyun spoke to Jae-young.

"Are you that worried?"

"How can I not be worried? I..."

Jae-young shut his mouth again, unable to say if he even knew what Seung-hyun was thinking. He didn't want to make Seung-hyun uncomfortable by saying unnecessary things.

If the current situation wasn't difficult, it would surely be a lie, but in the end, the person having the hardest time would be Seung-hyun.

"Are you cold?"

"The sun has only just started to set. It's still warm."

The sky had already started to turn crimson. Seung-hyun, who had been looking down at the city where the sun had begun to set, murmured softly.

"Looking down like this, it really looks small."

Looking down from the top of a building and looking down from the top of a mountain, they were similar in that they were looking down from a high place, but they were quite different. It was a coincidental discovery but quite a pleasing sight.

Seung-hyun quietly watched that sight for a long time, wanting to take it in as long as possible.

‘He acts like nothing matters, then his eyes sparkle at trivial things like this. He seems like I know him but don’t know him at the same time.’

Jae-young blankly stared at Seung-hyun like that, then suddenly felt cold and looked up at the sky. The sun had already completely set before he knew it.

Surprised, Jae-young adjusted the cardigan he was holding and draped it over Seung-hyun’s shoulders. Perhaps not feeling the cold at all, sharp words spilled out from a slightly suffocating feeling.

“Are you in your right mind? I told you it’s still quite cold at night.”

“Ah, time has already...”

Only then did Seung-hyun realize the sun had set and properly put on the cardigan draped over his shoulders. Only after putting on the clothes did he feel that the air had gotten quite cold.

“That’s right. I didn’t know because I was only inside the house.”

Since the temperature inside the house was always maintained at a similar level, the most Seung-hyun had done was occasionally open the window for ventilation during the day. He slightly shivered at the cold air he felt for the first time in a long time.

‘Oops.’

Then, in case Jae-young said let’s go back now, he tightly wrapped his clothes and pretended to be fine. It was a bit cold, but it was still spring when winter had passed and flowers were blooming here and there.

“I should have walked around places like this a bit more. I thought spending money while going around was the most fun thing to do.”

If he had known a bit earlier that he could feel joy even in trivial things like this, he could have enjoyed those days without feeling frustrated trying to find happiness in special places.

No matter what he thought, it was meaningless now. Seung-hyun checked the time and looked around.

“It will be pretty.”

“They only launch a few and it’s over. The one at the festival we went to last time felt like real fireworks.”

“That’s true, but it’s nice to be able to see it up close.”

There seemed to be quite a few people who had come to watch, as there were more people around than a little while ago. The excitement contained in each person’s chatter could be felt.

“That day, was it fun?”

“When are you talking about?”

“The day we played with sparklers at the beach.”

It might have been a bit embarrassing for two grown adults to play with a single stick, but he didn’t feel embarrassed because there were many people like that nearby.

He just found it amazing that he could become happy with just this cheap stick, and he thought the tiny sparks bouncing here and there were quite pretty.

“...It was fun.”

Jae-young answered, recalling the same picture as Seung-hyun. It’s just that if there was a slight difference, in Jae-young’s memory, the moment he became interested in Seung-hyun’s unexpected appearance with his eyes sparkling at that small light remained more vividly than the shining fireworks.

However, the fact that it was a moment they wanted to return to would be the same for both of them. While each was having similar thoughts, the first firework was launched before they knew it.

Bang-

People’s gazes converged to one place at the fireworks that burst with a loud sound. It was a single firework that wasn’t spectacular by Jae-young’s standards, but it didn’t seem that way to others.

“It’s pretty.”

“It would be nicer to see more go off.”

“If you want to see something like that, you have to go somewhere better. We’re watching it in the neighborhood, but you have a lot of complaints.”

“Well, that’s true. Anyway, it is pretty.”

The sound of people chattering and the intermittent sound of fireworks bursting. Excited faces and dazzling fireworks.

It was quite a chaotic situation, but Jae-young’s gaze was fixed on one place.

‘Maybe it was good to bring him out.’

Until before coming out, he had only felt frustrated about whether they really had to come out, whether they had to take this risk, but seeing Seung-hyun’s current appearance, he thought it didn’t matter.

He liked it so much, and it was only for a day. He felt sorry for showing such a dissatisfied attitude even though he knew Seung-hyun would feel stuffy staying inside the whole time.

“Do you like it that much?”

“It’s just because it’s been a long time since I’ve seen it.”

It wasn’t the first time he had seen fireworks. Even without looking into when and where such events were held, the loud sound and flashing fireworks were elements that couldn’t help but draw attention.

However, perhaps because he thought it was separate from himself, he hadn’t paid much attention to it, but seeing it leisurely in this situation, he thought it was really pretty.

‘Although everything might just look pretty to me now.’

Then so what? If he feels good right now, isn’t that enough? Seung-hyun thought that and smiled.

“...You’re right. It’s really pretty.”

Jae-young answered, fixing his gaze on Seung-hyun. Seung-hyun, who didn’t notice that Jae-young had been looking at him the whole time, not the

fireworks, due to the noisy surroundings and eye-catching fireworks, looked back at him and smiled.

“Right?”

It was the most carefree-looking face among the few smiling faces he had seen recently. Seeing Seung-hyun’s brightly smiling face like when they first met, Jae-young unknowingly smiled back.

Come to think of it, he couldn’t even remember the last time he had smiled so brightly. Jae-young took a step closer to Seung-hyun.

“It’s been so long since you’ve smiled like this.”

“...It really has.”

Seung-hyun smiled a bit shyly this time. He wasn’t sure whose story it was, but it had been a really long time since he had seen Jae-young’s smile.

‘It must be because of me.’

Tomorrow, after returning home, there was something he had to tell him. After hearing that, it would surely be difficult to smile like now.

So he wanted today to be a day of only happiness without any worries. Seung-hyun stared at Jae-young for a long time and lightly kissed his lips.

“!!”

The surprised Jae-young looked around. No one was looking at the two of them as their attention was drawn to the fireworks that hadn’t ended yet, but it was still surprising.

“What are you doing?”

It wasn’t that he disliked it, but it was startling. He was unfamiliar with actions he hadn’t done before, and he couldn’t help but be more surprised because it was always him who approached first.

“I just suddenly wanted to.”

Seung-hyun answered with a slight smile. Because today was really the last day he could pretend to be okay. There was something he wanted to say before that.

The words he couldn't say because it seemed like it would remain as eternal regret, but the words he thought Jae-young would know even if he didn't say them.

The words he had avoided because he was afraid of both hearing and saying them, but the words he felt would be too apologetic if he didn't say them until the end. Seung-hyun took a deep breath and said,

"I like you. Ju Jae-young."

"!!"

"You probably know even if I don't say it. But I thought I should say it at least once..."

Before he could even finish, Jae-young pulled Seung-hyun into an embrace. It was clearly the words he wanted to hear, but somehow, Seung-hyun saying those words felt like he would fly away at any moment, making him feel anxious.

Bang-

The biggest firework among the fireworks so far decorated the sky as if announcing it was the last, but neither of them could see that firework. It just seemed like the sky that had shone crimson and returned to a pitch-black color was telling them it was time to wake up from the dream now.

Episode 127

Sometimes happiness comes with a price. Seung-hyun was fine until he returned to the car, but on the way home, he felt exhausted. By the time he arrived home, he was overwhelmed with fatigue and barely managed to get ready for bed, half-leaning on Jae-young.

"You shouldn't have..."

"I guess I got tired from being out for too long after such a long time. I'll be fine after I get some sleep."

Seung-hyun reassured the worried Jae-young. However, one knows their own body's condition best.

He felt a bit dizzy, and even after entering the house, he still felt cold. After lying down, his head seemed to get a bit hot too.

“After I sleep... I'll be fine.”

Jae-young repeated what Seung-hyun had said to calm himself down. Rather than calming Jae-young, it was more like he was trying to reassure himself.

Tomorrow he had something he needed to say. For that, his condition didn't need to be great, but he at least needed to be well enough to have a conversation.

‘Let's sleep for now. After I sleep... maybe I'll be fine.’

Even though he knew the chances were low, Seung-hyun pulled the blanket over himself at Jae-young's insistence after repeating several times that he would be okay.

“I get it, so rest for now. Let's talk tomorrow. I have some medicine I'm taking, so I'm not sure if I can take this. First, I'll contact my doctor...”

Listening to Jae-young, Seung-hyun slowly closed his eyes, overwhelmed by drowsiness. He desperately prayed that he would at least be well enough to sit up tomorrow. But as always, God ignored Seung-hyun's prayers.

“You went out yesterday. Last night was a bit colder than usual...”

Seung-hyun woke up to a familiar voice. The soft-spoken voice belonged to the new doctor introduced by Professor Kim.

“Regardless of going out, your condition seems to have worsened. You must have felt it yourself. Perhaps it was because you felt frustrated...”

He could hear the sound, but it wasn't easy to open his eyes. He didn't have the strength to lift his eyelids or move a single finger, so Seung-hyun had no choice but to lie still.

“Since you’re already taking medicine, rather than hastily adding new medicine... I’ll give you an IV for now, so please monitor his condition for a few days.”

“... ”

“I understand your frustration, but right now, long outings are not possible.”

“I heard that Seung-hyun recommended walks.”

“I did recommend walks, but I meant short walks to get some sun nearby, not hours of walking around in the cold air. CEO Han must have understood it that way too.”

The doctor looked at Seung-hyun with slightly pitying eyes. He must have felt frustrated. There were often patients like this.

He understood the feelings of those who went out even though they knew what the consequences of a day out would be. It wasn’t comfortable to nag them since he couldn’t fully empathize.

Fortunately, the person who needed to hear the nagging was asleep now.

‘Moreover, unbeknownst to himself... with an alpha pregnant, there are too many variables to his condition.’

It was clear that the child in his belly was having a big impact on his rapidly deteriorating condition.

If he weren’t a patient who had already been given a terminal diagnosis and was barely receiving life-sustaining treatment, he would have done various tests, but there was a limit to what could be done since the patient himself had half-given up on treatment.

‘It’s better not to know about the child. He’s already having a hard time as it is.’

Perhaps it was because his appearance was so different from what he had heard. The doctor felt particularly sorry for Seung-hyun. After inserting the IV into Seung-hyun’s arm, the doctor got up.

“I’ll be staying around here for a while, so call me right away if anything happens.”

“ ... ”

Jae-young sat in front of Seung-hyun's bed and stared at him for a long time, forgetting to see the doctor out. There was no way Seung-hyun could have missed the meaning of the walk the doctor recommended.

He must have wanted to go out even if he had to lie. He understood that feeling, but he was angry.

'I should have opposed it after all. Instead of being distracted by his appearance and not doing anything, I should have brought him back, even if it was late.'

He was angry at Seung-hyun and himself. It wasn't that he didn't know he should have stopped him. He thought it would be okay just once because his heart softened at Seung-hyun's request and smile.

It was painful to see the consequences of such a naive thought. If it were like usual, he would have only blamed himself, but perhaps because of the prolonged frustration, this time his anger was directed elsewhere.

"If I had known it would be like this, it would have been better to never hear you say you love me."

If this was the price. Jae-young recited those words and left the room after looking at Seung-hyun. Despite the pain in his heart, Seung-hyun could only lie still without any reaction.

It was after falling asleep and waking up again that he regained enough strength to move. The IV fluid was almost gone.

“ ... ”

As he struggled to sit up, he saw someone watching him through the door that had opened at some point. It was Jae-young.

It seemed he had come to check since it was time for the IV fluid to run out. As expected, a caregiver was standing next to him, looking uncomfortable.

"Then I'll get going."

In the cold atmosphere, the caregiver, who had been reading the room, removed the needle and left the room as soon as she finished cleaning up, as

if running away. The two stared at each other for a long time without saying anything.

“...Did you want to go out that badly?”

Jae-young was the first to speak. His tone was calm but seemed angry.

“The doctor said. There’s no way you couldn’t have felt that you weren’t okay.”

“...”

“Even lying, you must have known... how I would feel.”

There was no way he could not have anticipated how painful it would be to see him unable to open his eyes after one wrong choice, to hear the doctor’s frustrated voice.

Jae-young asked again, holding back his anger.

“But did you still want to go out enough to not care?”

“...I thought at most I would just be tired for a few days.”

“You knew there would be at least that much of an aftermath, didn’t you?”

Seung-hyun closed his mouth at Jae-young’s words. Yes, he knew that would happen. He had nothing to say even if it was called greed.

“...Didn’t you also keep being trapped in this house because of me? Rather than meaninglessly spending time...”

“Who said it was meaningless?”

Jae-young cut off Seung-hyun’s words. It wasn’t that he didn’t understand what he might have been thinking. But he was upset that while Seung-hyun thought he couldn’t go out because of him, he couldn’t consider how Jae-young would be distressed by the thought that Seung-hyun’s condition worsened because of him.

For Jae-young, not being able to go out for a few months was incomparably less important than Seung-hyun’s health.

“...You just thought about yourself, didn’t you?”

Even though he knew that getting angry would change nothing and only hurt each other, he couldn't think rationally, perhaps because of the prolonged frustration.

Even if he got a little hurt, even if it was frustrating. The heart that had endured, thinking it was okay as long as he could be by Seung-hyun's side, began to crumble little by little.

"To you, you're the most pitiful one. You pretend to think about how I feel, but you just wanted to feel better, didn't you? Just one outing, some lackluster fireworks. What's the big deal about that?"

What was so special about that, that he couldn't even think of the obvious and take better care of him? He was angry at himself, but his sharp words were directed at Seung-hyun.

"Seeing that, did you think I would be happy? No, of course not. An event so shoddy it's embarrassing to even call it fireworks, a path that's nothing special, just a place to occasionally take a walk. What's so great about an outing like that?"

Even though Jae-young definitely felt happiness in that moment too, he got angry as if he never had. They were words he would regret as soon as he turned around, but he couldn't think of anything else at the moment.

"You just thought about yourself. Don't say you did it because of me."

"..."

This seems to be the first time he's gotten this angry. It must not just be because of one day, but an outburst of everything that had built up. Seung-hyun bowed his head, his heart aching.

'...It's because of me.'

Because I was greedy. To someone who could have lived his whole life not knowing this feeling. With various thoughts, tears welled up. Seung-hyun tried hard not to show those tears and barely spoke.

"...I'm sorry."

The greed to make just one day, just one day of happy memories seemed to have created the worst memories for both of them, and he felt uneasy.

The feeling of something hot welling up as his insides burned must be because of that. Seung-hyun thought so and gripped the blanket.

Episode 128

“...I’m sorry. I acted out of greed.”

Seung-hyun apologized without any excuses. Seeing him look so pitiful, Jae-young stopped being angry and let out a long sigh.

“ ... ”

He knew he should apologize for worrying about him and for speaking harshly. But right now, those words didn’t seem to come out easily.

“...Sigh.”

Jae-young sighed again. He saw Seung-hyun’s shoulders tremble, but Jae-young only washed his face without saying anything.

“For now, rest. Let’s talk again tomorrow.”

Thinking they wouldn’t be able to have a proper conversation even if he stayed longer, Jae-young left the room without looking back at Seung-hyun. He had barely woken up after being unconscious all day.

Even now, his condition didn’t look normal, so rather than keeping him to have an unpleasant conversation, it seemed better to let him rest more.

It was clearly a rational judgment and he thought it was the best decision. Thinking it was the best choice for both of them, Jae-young returned to his room and tossed and turned until sunrise, unable to sleep.

Around the time dim sunlight entered through the window, Jae-young, who had quietly left his room on the pretext of checking Seung-hyun’s condition, carefully opened the door to Seung-hyun’s room.

“What is this...”

The moment he opened the door, he felt a pheromone that was hard to ignore. It was a strange kind, completely different from Seung-hyun's very faint pheromone that he had smelled once before.

It seemed like an alpha's, but also like an omega's. With the conviction that something strange was happening, Jae-young ran to Seung-hyun.

"Seung-hyun. Are you..."

Jae-young, surprised by how hot the body he held in his arms was, almost dropped him for a moment. Seung-hyun's condition was too abnormal to be a simple cold or flu.

"Ugh..."

Seung-hyun, who was nestled in his arms, groaned softly and narrowly opened his eyes. His gaze wandered, unable to properly find its destination, as if he couldn't see properly.

"Are you conscious? No... this isn't the time. The doctor... my phone..."

Jae-young, not knowing what to do, laid Seung-hyun down properly and got up to find his phone. At that moment, a hot hand grabbed Jae-young's wrist.

"...Jae, young?"

Seung-hyun called Jae-young's name in a strained voice. Although he was dizzy and couldn't see well, he was sure of who he was holding onto.

"Are you okay? No, there's no way. Since when were you like this? You should have..."

Jae-young, who was about to say why he suffered alone without saying anything, closed his mouth. Why? He knew the reason best.

"I have to... tell you..."

"Tell me later. For now, the doctor... no, the hospital..."

"I'm sorry."

He had heard those words countless times since yesterday. What was so important about that in this situation, that he barely managed to say it? Jae-young clenched his fist in frustration.

“Let’s talk about that after we go to the hospital first...”

“I... have something I didn’t tell you. The most important thing... I was scared to say it because I’m so happy now...”

“I told you not to talk.”

Just moving his lips seemed so difficult for him. Jae-young unknowingly shouted.

“Actually... I don’t regret it.”

Seung-hyun said, letting out a hot breath. He said he regretted meeting him. He said he regretted not pushing Jae-young away when he approached, leaving their feelings to cross an irreversible line with a naive thought, but he realized after letting everything go.

He said that despite everything, the time they spent together was truly happy, and that while he was sorry for being selfish, he was both sad and glad to have come to know these feelings.

“I was glad to find out, to spend time with you. Although it might not be the same for you...”

He had to answer no, but he couldn’t think properly due to anxiety. His calm attitude, as if this moment was the last, was strange.

‘Could it be that what he wanted to say...’

Anxious that what Seung-hyun was trying to say today was what he had pretended not to know, Jae-young held Seung-hyun’s hand tightly. Seung-hyun, who mustered all his strength to hold that hand, said,

“I’m sorry. And...”

His eyelids were so heavy even though he hadn’t been awake for long. It was cold, but his body was also hot. He felt like if he fell asleep like this, he wouldn’t be able to wake up again.

With the thought that he wouldn't be able to say everything he needed to, Seung-hyun squeezed out his last remaining strength. Even if he couldn't say anything else, he at least wanted to say this.

"Thank you."

For letting him experience so many firsts, for staying by his side so he didn't have to go through the pain alone, even if he couldn't say they only had good times.

He now regretted that he hadn't expressed himself properly, saying he was pushing him away and rarely saying anything nice. If he had known it would turn out like this, he would have expressed it better.

'There are still things I need to say...'

But now he was truly at his limit. Seung-hyun tried to open his closing eyes, but it had little effect. Deep sleep quickly overtook him.

"...Seung-hyun?"

The faint strength that had been holding his hand disappeared. Jae-young urgently called out to Seung-hyun, but there was no answer.

Jae-young got up and ran to his room to find his phone. The body that had been in his arms was so hot that the heat felt vivid even as he grabbed his phone and found the doctor's contact to make the call.

'This can't be happening. Please...'

Jae-young tightly gripped the phone, not even realizing that he was crying. The ominous premonition overwhelmed Jae-young to the point where it could no longer be avoided.

The doctor who checked Seung-hyun's condition immediately transferred him to the hospital. Even though he thought he could hold on for a while, his rapidly deteriorating body had worsened to the point of no return.

"You should prepare yourself. If he receives life-sustaining treatment, he'll be able to hold on a little longer, but..."

However, it was only delaying time. Since he was already unconscious, he wouldn't be in pain, but life-sustaining treatment required the family's intention.

'But CEO Han's family...'

Money wouldn't be an issue, but if his death was already determined, no. His parents clearly wouldn't care even if there was a way.

"It's difficult to register someone with an uncertain relationship with the patient as the guardian."

Professor Kim said with a troubled expression. Although he had heard from the doctor he introduced that Jae-young had been taking care of Seung-hyun, that wasn't enough.

If the family found out that an unrelated person was registered as the guardian, they would surely ask what was going on, but there was no good way to deal with it.

'...This person does seem to be the child's father though.'

Professor Kim thought, looking at Jae-young's disastrous state. Someone Seokhyung was sure wouldn't harm Seung-hyun to the extent of entrusting him. Someone who could fall apart to this extent upon hearing about Seung-hyun's condition must not have an ordinary relationship.

However, what was needed now was a legally bound relationship. But among his family, there seemed to be no one who would help Seung-hyun live even a month, no, a week longer.

"Then what happens if he can't receive life-sustaining treatment?"

"With basic treatment... it'll be difficult to last more than a week."

Everything was a mess to the point where it was hard to gauge where things had gone wrong. Not only the part that had been a problem in the beginning, but every part of his body was so unstable that it could be said that everything was wrong.

Due to the completely broken pheromone gland emitting pheromones that weren't its original ones and then suddenly stopping, aside from the times

sedatives were administered, even the non-beta medical staff had a hard time checking his condition.

It was the same for Jae-young. All he could do was hear vague news without even being able to enter the hospital room.

The time he could enter Seung-hyun's room was less than two hours a day. There was a limit to using pheromone suppressants, so it was better to restrict access unless it was absolutely necessary.

"...Since when?"

Jae-young asked after staring at the closed hospital room door for a long time. There was no way he didn't know about such a serious illness. It made sense why he had avoided him and tried so hard to push him away.

"...It was around last fall."

"..."

"He changed a lot since then. To the point where I can't even remember how he was before... Maybe it's because he no longer needed to pretend to be strong."

Professor Kim interjected a few words even though he knew it was uncalled for. Maybe it was because Jae-young's expression was such a mess.

'...It would have been better if this person had been CEO Han's guardian.'

"The sedative is scheduled to be administered at 3 p.m. tomorrow, so you'll be able to see him for a short time around 3:30."

It wasn't much time, but if he knew when he could see him, he wouldn't have to make unnecessary trips. Thinking that, Professor Kim spoke and stepped aside.

"..."

Even after Professor Kim left, Jae-young couldn't leave that spot for a long time. Last fall. That was around the time Jae-young had met Seung-hyun at the bar.

'I want to laze around at home all day without doing anything, without any worries. I want to go on a trip without any plans. Oh right. The ocean, it's been a long time since I went to the ocean, so somewhere pretty by the sea...'

'And... I wish I had a friend similar to me. Someone I can confide everything to. I want to try dating too. I don't really like being alone.'

'Also... I want to live happily like that for a long, long time.'

The moment he recalled the words he had heard on the day they first met, Jae-young ran out of the hospital as if escaping, feeling like he couldn't bear it any longer.

Episode 129

Perhaps there was a hint in every single word.

'I don't expect you to understand, but if you could just stay by my side... then I'd feel a little less lonely.'

At first, he must have thought of him as just someone to soothe his loneliness. But just as Seung-hyun was to Jae-young, Jae-young also became an increasingly precious person to Seung-hyun.

To the point where the unwanted eternal farewell was bound to leave a scar deep in his heart. Jae-young washed his face and bowed his head, saying that the moment he realized that, it began to torment him.

"...Because of that..."

He should have never met him in the first place, those words were not to rebuke Jae-young but himself. However, in the end, Seung-hyun said he was sorry for not regretting it.

It must mean that the time they spent together was that happy. It was the same for Jae-young. His head hurt as if it would crack, and he felt so miserable that he wanted to deny everything in the world, but even if he went back, he would still meet Seung-hyun.

No, he wanted to go back. Then he wouldn't have troubled him by talking about having a lot of time or things in the distant future. He would have taken better care of him, treated him better. At least more than now...

'...What was the last thing I said?'

At the sudden thought, Jae-young traced back his memory. He remembered only rebuking Seung-hyun before moving him to the hospital, unable to have a proper conversation in his urgent state of mind.

It would be fortunate if that was all. Jae-young bit his lip hard at the memories that came back vividly.

'To you, you're the most pitiful one. You pretend to think about how I feel, but you just wanted to feel better, didn't you?'

'Seeing that, did you think I would be happy? No, of course not. An event so shoddy it's embarrassing to even call it fireworks, a path that's nothing special, just a place to occasionally take a walk. What's so great about an outing like that?'

'You just thought about yourself. Don't say you did it because of me.'

Could he say it wasn't sincere? He vividly remembered his tone and expression at the moment he said those words. He let out his irritation as it was due to frustration and exhaustion.

He was also angry at himself for not stopping him properly, and he felt frustrated that Seung-hyun's illness seemed to be because of him. However, there was no need to take that out on Seung-hyun.

At least, he should have comforted him properly first. He should have stayed by his side and said something so he wouldn't suffer alone.

'...I'm sorry.'

He should have come to his senses at least when Seung-hyun bowed his head and apologized without any excuses. Jae-young hit the car seat hard.

To think that was the last conversation they had. If he had known it would be like this, no. Even if he hadn't known, he shouldn't have said those things.

There was no way Seung-hyun didn't know his own condition. Given that there seemed to be a change in his state of mind after returning home, the words he said he would say after coming back were probably about his health.

'...He must have known that if he told me, he wouldn't be able to go out anymore.'

That's why he begged to go out one last time. That's why he begged to see the fireworks that were nothing special, and why he said he liked him, words he thought he would never say.

There were definitely signs, but not wanting to know, he didn't think deeply about them. But did he really not know?

'...It's not like I fully believed it when he said he would be fine after the surgery.'

Would it have been better if he were really stupid and didn't notice those signs at all? Then at least he wouldn't be someone who said those things knowing.

It hurt piercingly to think that his last image of Jae-young, their last conversation, might remain as a scar.

"You said you would tell me after it was all over..."

Jaeseong, who had forcibly made an appointment and dragged Jae-young out, hesitated to nag him as soon as he saw his face. His face hadn't looked good before, but this time it was really such a mess that it was hard to even talk to him.

"..."

He had received some help, and he had come out for a bit since there was time before visiting hours. Jae-young glanced at his watch and said,

"...I need to finish talking by 2 o'clock."

"What on earth happened?"

Jae-young hesitated for a moment. He didn't know where to start and end the story, and how much he could say.

But it was something he couldn't hide forever, and it was something that would be known soon anyway. Jae-young opened his mouth with difficulty.

"...They say to prepare yourself."

"For what?"

Jaeseong frowned at the words without a subject. Telling him to prepare himself out of the blue. He only thought it didn't seem to be good news, but he couldn't gauge what he was talking about.

"Seung-hyun."

"Why him?"

"Soon..."

He might die. How could he say those words out loud? Jae-young couldn't continue his words and smacked his lips, then sighed.

"He's in the hospital. At the hospital... they said it's best to prepare ourselves. That it'll be hard for him to hold on any longer."

Jaeseong's expression hardened as he finally realized what he was talking about. The rumor that his health wasn't good had already spread here and there, but if he was told to prepare himself, his condition seemed to be more serious than he thought.

Could it be that his antics were because of that? Jaeseong thought so and observed Jae-young's reaction. It seemed he hadn't known for long, and it looked like he was quite shocked.

'Out of so many people, he had to pick someone like that.'

He already didn't like him, but he disliked him even more now. If the reason for his antics was because he knew about his health condition, Seung-hyun must have realized his condition not very recently.

'What's the point of dating when you're going to die soon? No, does Jae-young like him? Anyway, why did he start a relationship that won't last long?'

"...So what are you going to do?"

He didn't like it, but he couldn't do anything about what had already happened, and he thought it was rather fortunate. If he was someone who would leave soon, there would be no more entanglements.

Even if it was hard for a while, he would be able to forget someday, and then everything would return to its place.

"If it was going to turn out like this anyway, it would have been better not to meet in the first place. What a hardship for you too..."

"Don't say that."

The eyes that had been blank sharpened for a moment. Jaeseong flinched a little, surprised.

"Even so..."

"...Yeah. I understand that you're having a hard time... but think of it as something inevitable. Just... It'll be hard now, but you'll forget someday, and the living have to live. It's not like anything will change because you're being like this."

"...Forget?"

Jae-young laughed. Could he forget these feelings, these memories? Was it that easy?

The happy memories, the current regrets. It seemed he could never forget everything. Especially the last few days he spent at home.

'...I shouldn't have said those things.'

The scenery they saw together, the fireworks. Everything was fun, but there was no way he could recall those memories fondly. Because of the words he spat out, even the pretty memories that would remain as the last were ruined.

"...I don't think there's much point in talking about it now. After it's all over... contact me then. You'll need time to pull yourself together too."

Jaeseong looked at Jae-young and sighed, getting up from his seat. It didn't seem like they could communicate at the moment, and it was unfortunate, but if he had to prepare himself, there probably wasn't much time left until Seung-hyun left forever, so it was really the end now.

“I’ll make up an excuse to Mother... After it’s all over, go stay at the villa for a while. It’s better to keep it from the other family members.”

So there was no need to say anything. Jaeseong tapped Jae-young’s shoulder and left. Jae-young couldn’t get up from his spot for a long time, lost in thought.

“...What time is it?”

Then, suddenly thinking he had to make it in time for visiting hours, Jae-young raised his head and hurriedly checked the time. It was already well past two o’clock.

It took roughly more than 30 minutes to get from here to the hospital. He had intended to arrive with plenty of time, but while he was unable to come to his senses, time had become tight.

Thinking this wasn’t the time to be doing this, Jae-young hurriedly left. Contrary to his urgency, the traffic was a bit congested, and by the time Jae-young arrived at the hospital, it was about 10 minutes past the 3:30 that Professor Kim had mentioned.

“Is visitation possible now?”

“Yes. But right now...”

As soon as Jae-young heard from the nurse with a familiar face that visitation was possible, he half-ran towards the hospital room. It seemed like there was something she was trying to say, but it didn’t seem urgent enough to stop him and talk, so he didn’t care.

Taking the VIP ward elevator, Jae-young arrived at the floor where Seung-hyun’s room was and took a small deep breath before heading to his room. In front of the door, he saw someone’s shadow through the glass window.

“ ... ”

Thinking it would be Professor Kim, Jae-young opened the door and froze upon facing the owner of the shadow. Inside the room, an unexpected person was gazing at Seung-hyun.

Episode 130

“Why are you here?”

Jae-young asked without hiding his hostility. The visitor who arrived at Seung-hyun’s hospital room first was none other than Tae-sung.

“...I wanted to check.”

“I guess you wanted to check because you felt refreshed that the person you hate can’t even get up again.”

It was meant to mock Tae-sung, but somehow it felt like he hurt himself more. Jae-young said, trying hard to ignore his aching heart.

“If you’re done checking, please leave now. Isn’t it enough?”

Jae-young said as he strode towards Seung-hyun. He didn’t know well what Seung-hyun’s life was like before meeting him, but he knew what kind of person Tae-sung was to him.

‘He’s also the one who would benefit the most if Seung-hyun disappears, so I guess he feels refreshed.’

He didn’t like that such a person was looking at Seung-hyun as if observing him. Tae-sung stared blankly at Jae-young.

He knew that Seung-hyun was sick. He knew his condition was serious. Although he had thought this might happen based on the nuance of what Chairman Han said.

‘He seemed like a person who wouldn’t bleed a drop even if stabbed.’

Did Seung-hyun always look like this? Seeing him with his eyes closed felt strange, as if he was looking at a completely unfamiliar person.

“They said if left like this, his heart will stop within a few days. There is a treatment he can take a chance on, even if the possibility is uncertain, but it comes with risks so it requires the family’s consent.”

“Are you mocking someone right now?”

A treatment Jae-young knew about but had no way to handle. Jae-young frowned at Tae-sung’s words and glared at him.

“...I’m also Seung-hyun’s family anyway.”

“...”

“If you want, I’ll make sure he can receive that treatment.”

“...!”

Jae-young froze in surprise at the unexpected words. He had never thought of being able to get help from someone.

“...Why?”

Was there some ulterior motive? But if left like this, Seung-hyun would die anyway. Even if it was a trap, he couldn’t help but grab onto the offer.

“I thought I knew Seung-hyun very well. I thought he was rotten from the start, someone with no chance of rehabilitation... but now that it’s come to this, I can’t help but think that I’m also part of this family.”

The Hans were all out of their minds. He knew that, but he had been pretending not to know that he was also a part of that family.

If they had met somewhere else. If their first meeting hadn’t been such a mess, even if they couldn’t become close like other families, maybe things wouldn’t have gotten this twisted, he belatedly thought.

Since this was the only thing he could do now, he wanted to help, even if only slightly. It was just a rationalization for himself that wouldn’t reach Seung-hyun, but it would be better than doing nothing.

“I’m doing this for my own peace of mind, so you don’t need to thank me.”

He thought he should have said something when Seung-hyun’s eyes were open, when they could have a conversation, but it was meaningless. Tae-sung passed by Jae-young, who had blankly frozen.

“I’ll get going now.”

He had made time during his lunch break to visit. The fact that Seung-hyun was hospitalized had already been revealed, and Professor Kim, saying it couldn’t be hidden forever, had pestered him and told him the reality, which was more miserable than he had expected.

‘So this is the end.’

He should have listened to what happened before and after. Even if he thought it was a waste of time, he should have had at least one proper conversation.

‘Seung-hyun probably wouldn’t have told me honestly even if I did, but at least...’

He felt like he would never forget the last conversation they had for a very long time. Tae-sung, recalling Seung-hyun’s face looking at him with eyes that seemed to say there was no value or hope in having a conversation, shook his head slightly.

‘This won’t change anything, but I should at least do everything I can.’

The time to prepare for farewell is never enough no matter how long, but he wanted to let him see his face a little longer, to let him have a little less regret.

“I told Professor Kim. Please hear about the treatment schedule from him.”

With those last words, Tae-sung left the hospital room. He would never see Seung-hyun again. Tae-sung thought so as he returned to his place.

Seung-hyun was in a deep sleep. He couldn’t see anything or hear anything, but he didn’t feel suffocated.

He was tired. It would be nice if he could rest like this for a long time. Seung-hyun thought so as he was trapped in the void.

How long had it been like that? There were memories flowing in like waves. Rather than his own memories, it felt like watching a movie or drama from a few steps away.

‘There’s no way I’m recessive. There’s no way...’

The man muttering while looking down at the torn genetic test paper had a face Seung-hyun knew very well. This was “Han Seung-hyun’s” memory.

‘How did I give birth to you? Even after hearing that I won’t be able to have a child again, I thought it was fine since you’re an Alpha, but to think you’re a half-baked excuse for an Alpha that’s embarrassing to even call one.’

‘...Anyway, you’re Chairman Han’s only Alpha grandson. Don’t do anything that can be used against you and just focus on studying. That old man won’t give up his position to a Beta or Omega.’

It wasn’t difficult to recognize whose voices they were, the vicious one and the displeased one.

‘A bastard is better than a recessive.’

‘It’s all because of you. I gave birth to you without aborting because you were called an Alpha. If I had known this would happen...’

‘Disgusting. Not only that I’m recessive, but also that bastard who crawled into this house because I’m recessive.’

They were all memories that had a big impact on Seung-hyun’s life. Although they were only fragmentary scenes, the emotions “Han Seung-hyun” felt at those moments were vividly conveyed.

At first, a heartbreaking sadness was felt, followed by a sense of self-reproach. And as Tae-sung from his memories appeared, the self-reproach and sadness gradually turned into anger.

It wasn’t that Seung-hyun didn’t understand why Seung-hyun disliked Tae-sung. The two had a twisted relationship from the start and were in a position where they couldn’t become close even if they wanted to.

However, the emotions of Seung-hyun seen through the memories were not that simple. Seung-hyun found out why “Han Seung-hyun” hated Tae-sung so much.

Tired of hating himself, hurting and hating himself became too painful, so he turned the direction of hatred. It can’t be said that the method was right, but it was his way of survival.

Would it have been different if he had grown up among a normal family, if he hadn’t aimed to be Chairman Han’s successor from the beginning?

‘I did my best to the point where I couldn’t try harder. I devoted myself only to studying, reducing my time to eat and sleep.’

“Han Seung-hyun” had to be perfect. Perfect enough to overcome the recessive trait. Perfect enough to prove that he, who had lived his whole life for that position, was more suitable as a successor than Tae-sung, who was just lucky to be born with the right trait.

However, the more he tried, the more he realized how difficult it was to overcome the difference in traits. Even if he studied all day except for sleeping, he couldn’t beat Tae-sung, who enjoyed playing ball with his friends during lunch and always fell asleep earlier than him at night.

‘...I wish he would die.’

The more he felt that difference, the more Seung-hyun came to hate Tae-sung. As his self-hatred grew and he realized his own limitations, he couldn’t help it.

‘I want to kill him.’

That feeling didn’t disappear even after such a long time passed that he forgot where his feelings started. Seung-hyun became exhausted without realizing it.

Seung-hyun devoted himself to work without even realizing that at some point, his life goal had become catching up to Tae-sung and hindering him. He sometimes lost his way because his goal was wrong, but he didn’t care anymore.

‘CEO Han will become the next representative, won’t he? Director Han is outstanding too, but... considering what the Chairman usually says.’

‘Traits are difficult to overcome. Well, there’s a precedent, so... don’t lean too much to one side.’

However, there were moments when he got tired. He tried not to show it to anyone and overcome it himself, but the burning sensation was not easy to ignore.

‘Would it have been better if I was born in a world without Alphas, Omegas, or Betas? Even if I was born dirt poor, it would have been better than now.’

One day, “Han Seung-hyun” impulsively drank a lot alone and muttered. Although he habitually thought that getting tired meant losing and that not doing what he could was foolish, that day was different.

That was the last piece. Seung-hyun was submerged again in a space with nothing, floating. It was a sweet rest that he didn’t want to wake up from.