

KIM REON

Father's Winter

Written by

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"You can call the cops if you want to. I'm sorry. This is hard for me, too."

"I wonder if you'll ever know what it's like not to see your child for 14 years. Not knowing whether she's living or dead. Not knowing whether that child is responsible for the death and mutilation of other human beings. Whether to hold yourself responsible for that death and mutilation because it is your child who is pulling the triggers, setting the bombs."

"I didn't kill anybody. I didn't come here to defend myself or to talk politics. If you don't believe by now that what I did was an act of conscience to stop the war, then there's nothing I can say to you that's going to make you understand."

She picked up the remote control and turned off the videotape. She already knew the rest of the conversation between the father and daughter, but her eyes and her heart were still restlessly trained on the TV screen.

Why did she pick this one without bothering to watch any other movies? It wasn't even a plot summary for a newly released video she was writing, but a special review of videos based on a chosen theme.

The theme Eunhee chose—which was no longer a timely one, even for her—was the conflict between activists and their parents as depicted in the movies. Having been immersed in activism for over ten years, it was clear to Eunhee that the word itself seemed to exude a negative connotation. But adding another word in front, like reform or revolution or even liberation, didn't suit her anymore, so she had chosen the cool, objective tone of the word activist. Of course, it was also a more respectable substitute, considering the feelings of the people who would be reading the video newsletter.

If she had chosen the theme of feminist films worth watching instead, it would have been much timelier, and video rental sales would have gone up. So why was she digging up things from the past that no one felt the same way about anymore?

It might have begun with the phone call in the middle of the night from Eunsu, who sounded like she would burst into tears at any moment. Or perhaps it started when Eunsu, who could barely respond to Eunhee's questions delivered in a calm, quiet voice

like a 411 operator and was unable to finish her sentence, hung up the phone, leaving only a long silence after the words "our father."

"Your mother and me... do you think about us?"

"Do you really have to ask that?"

"Yes. The last thing I remember you saying to me was that I was an imperialist pig personally responsible for the war, the spread of poverty, racism."

"I was young."

"Yes. You were young, and talented, and beautiful, and so full of love. My God, Annie. Why did you throw it all away? Your mother misses you terribly, and Danny."

The middle-aged daughter streaming with tears in the movie and the father speaking quietly and coolly but unable to hide his obstinance, aside from the differences between east and west and even overlooking the generational difference, they bore a striking resemblance—to Eunhee in her mid-twenties and her father.

Eunhee's initial words to her father when she met him in the *galbi* restaurant had started the same way. She asked if he was going to call the police. Ah, no. How could you...? How could my daughter do such things? Those friends of yours drove you to it since you're from Gwangju, didn't they? Her father sounded perplexed and was clearly trying to suppress his anger.

Was it when she chose the theater that she decided to make this her life's work? Her friends had snickered when she insisted on the theater for their location. Is everyone going to run out in the middle of a movie to watch you guys? Well, that should be a lot of fun. Someone asked Eunhee with a barely concealed smile on his face what movie was showing. Hmm, "Playboy" or something with Richard Gere. Ha ha, that sounds like a good one! At Eunhee's indifferent response, the guys slapped the desk and laughed. Yeah, it's really good. She had never actually seen the movie, but she joined in all the same.

Back then, Richard Gere had an artless charm. The scene was still vivid in her mind of him standing without a stitch of clothing on in front of a window with the morning sunlight shattering around him. Of course, as he stood backlit, facing the light, everything was falling apart.

She had chosen the Yeonheung Theater in Yeongdeungpo. It was the only one among the high-rise buildings at the Yeongdeungpo intersection that had an open door to the roof, and because it was a theater, she could come and go as she pleased and the only thing that happened was she became crazy about Richard Gere. Since everything checked out, that was the place she chose.

D-day came on a very cold day in December, when there were few days left in the year. As soon as the protest lines had formed on the main thoroughfare of the Yeongdeungpo intersection, Eunhee and another girl who was in charge of the rooftop protest unfurled a banner below the roof. They shook cans of red spray paint and wrote slogans on the walls. The banner read "Repeal the Fascist Constitution"... and something else as well. She couldn't remember exactly. Maybe it said "Pass the People's Constitution", or the "Democratic Constitution." Down below, her younger classmates and their leader who was a friend of hers were quickening their pace in time with the slogan "Down with Fascism," which hadn't changed through all four years of college. Eunhee raised her fist and tried to chant with them. But no matter how hard she tried to yell, the words wouldn't come out. Just like in a dream.

She found out later while running the video store. The title of the movie was "American Gigolo," not "Playboy." Though, of course, playboy and gigolo meant the same thing. She had considered watching it again. But in the end she changed her mind she didn't know if she could handle the heartache.

Eunhee remembered how at the demonstration that day everything was slow and drawn-out, like a long take in a movie. Of course, it might have only felt that way because she couldn't make a sound except for the rustle of her dry mouth. Perhaps because there weren't any so-called security leaks, her classmates were able to circle the street an unprecedented number of times even with the Yeongdeungpo police right under their noses. Even so, there were over twenty of them.

When the tear gas began to explode below, Eunhee and her friend stayed on the roof, chanting. They had to stay there until they were brutally dragged away. Only after the scene in the street was broken up and several men who were theater employees rather than police officers came running and pleaded with them to stop, did they stomp back down the steep stairway, huffing and puffing. Or, they might have been pushed down at the hands of those men. At any rate, the men disappeared briefly to call the police, and Eunhee and her friend agreed to slip in amongst the theater patrons rather than stand and fight alone.

That was the moment she believed that life was the manifestation of inevitability. It was the shining heyday of her youth, when she mocked things like fate or destiny. After passing thirty, whenever life was urged on by unfortunate incidents that popped up one after the other, she couldn't help but picture those two girls splitting up and grabbing seats on the first and second floors of the theater that day.

Richard Gere was being taken away as a murder suspect. Inside the theater, round flashlight beams were circling here and there Eunhee raised the collar of her knee-length red coat and, with nowhere else to go, looked up vacantly at their searching eyes. Her heart

was pounding like it was going to burst through several layers of clothing at any moment. Needless to say, it was a good thing there were so many other people in the theater. She was overjoyed when she saw her friend in the bathroom at the appointed time. They deliberated again, agreeing to end the fight there and meet at the entrance to the subway station if they got out safely. The station they decided to meet at, was it Daerim Station or Sindaebang Station?

After that, she never saw another Richard Gere movie. Around the time she felt free of him, she opened her video store. "Days of Heaven," "Looking for Mister Goodbar," "An Officer and a Gentleman," "Pretty Woman"— he had played the lead in quite a few movies as befitting such a big name star.

At the time, a not so funny thing had happened, too. She couldn't get out. Time kept passing. She sat quietly, like a hostage, watching the love of a high-class woman and a man who made a living off of his body. The love scene wouldn't end, and at some point, a strong middle-aged man sitting next to Eunhee began leaning towards her. At first, she laughed at his audacity. Then after a while, an unpleasant feeling crept over her, making her hair stand on end. Once her indignation abated, she began to calculate how the man might be of use to her, and in the end, she became restless. If she took his arm and left with him, she might be able to get past the theater entrance, but he didn't look like he was thinking about leaving at all.

Even though it was a hair-raising story and no laughing matter, Eunhee later laughed uncontrollably while telling the story to her friends. Back then, she was young, and as young as she was, there was nobody and nothing in the world to fear.

When the man was reaching for Eunhee's hand, a bell shrilled loudly inside the theater and people began to leave. Eunhee quickly mixed in with the crowd without a second thought. The front of the theater was surrounded by several rows of riot police, and the Yeongdeungpo area was a sea of blue. No sooner had she slipped quietly out of the theater than giggles were escaping her mouth and sides. Hey you bastards, I'm the one you're looking for, right here! I'm walking right in front of you. Stupid idiots! Fascist tools!

What happened when she met her father?

"Those traitors. I asked Detective Cho, and he said the ones arrested that day already gave them your name, so you're on their wanted list. My goodness, well, well."

He pulled out a cigarette and lit it.

Detective Cho, that leech. He was a petty detective from Eunhee's school who received money in exchange for reporting her movements to her father, who was worried about his daughter's every move. That information, a mere petty detective looking after her,

couldn't have amounted to the rotten ties that helped bind her father's position, yet he was always grateful for his favors and slipped him thick envelopes of money.

"Nevertheless, you seem to be in luck. Your name didn't come up at the Yeongdeungpo station. Detective Cho really went to a lot of trouble again this time. If it weren't for him..."

But she felt more pity for the friends who had kept her name secret. And that was at the Yeongdeungpo police station, which was rumored to be a violent, awful place.

Eunhee was able to guess that the aftermath of the fight had not yet reached her father. However, that was the result of bribes, going around kowtowing to this person and that person with white envelopes stuffed in his breast pocket, all because of one damn daughter

Her father carefully placed some grilled meat on top of Eunhee's rice, which was unlike him. When the piece of meat she was reluctant to pick up slid down her throat, faces with eyes swollen blue from beatings, faces turned sallow from working in factories, faces that were only half there from avoiding the eyes of the police, faces and more faces flickered before her eyes.

"Eunhee, you're not my only kid, you know. I have a lot of mouths to feed besides you. Do you know what would happen to our family if I lost my job? Everything rests in your hands. Go back home with me."

Father, I cannot do that. You think your daughter is brave and great, but I'm not. I got through four years of college, pussyfooting around for the sake of your position. I never stayed to the end, even for fights I planned all by myself, from choosing the headquarters to selecting the game plan. Before, I always had to furtively retreat to the sidewalk filled with onlookers or enter a safe building. And do you think that's all? The occupation of the U.S. Information Agency, the occupation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the occupation of the Democratic Justice Party's Training Center... Do you know how I justified it to myself, when I sent my friends to the tops of buildings and even more of the younger ones into the strike encampments every time there was an important fight that filled the newspapers? Just you wait, I said. I will gladly suffer as much as you have walking into the jaws of death. I'm only looking for my opportunity. Father, you don't know how long I've waited for this moment, how eagerly I've looked forward to being able to free myself of your position.

"No, Father, I have to go."

"Where, who are you going to go see?"

Father, the date for the next protest is already set. It's not just our school but an illegal street demonstration held in coalition with a so-called major university. A much

more important demonstration than ever before is just around the corner. I'll be taking the lead until I'm arrested. This is the road I've chosen, and it's my life. I won't be a fence-sitter again because of you or because of the family.

Her father went on and on, as he always did, lamenting that it wasn't just about her, did he have to lose his job for her to be satisfied, and how could such a smart, well-raised daughter have turned out that way, while Eunhee listened mutely to the words that were all too familiar to her ears.

Finally, he stuffed several bills in her pocket, told her not to starve and to be careful where she slept and turned his back on her. That was not at all like him.

Her father, Eunhee's father, was not the idealistic type who thought he could persuade his daughter with a few words. Instead, beating a fully grown daughter in front of the entire family until the stick broke, taking a pair of scissors and chopping off her hair so she couldn't go outside, calling her boarding room long-distance everyday from Gwangju to Seoul to check on her whereabouts, calling her professors to check whether she showed up to class, burning her books...

Her father left without so much as an overcoat on a bitterly cold winter's day. Eunhee turned away and swallowed her tears. She wondered whether the seemingly endless war with her father that had lasted throughout college was over.

"Will you take him, Dad? He wants to study music. He's good. They want him at Juilliard."

"Just like they wanted you. Do you still have that practice board?"

"So far. Danny learned to play piano on it."

"So you taught him? There's some irony in this, don't you think? Here you are, asking me to take Danny into a life that you ran from like a shot out of hell. Is this what he wants?"

Father shouldn't have left like that. No, he shouldn't have left with his shoulders hunched over. He should have grabbed Eunhee by the hair and forced her into a waiting car or boxed her ears for saying she would go her own way. That would be the fatherly thing to do. Had he done so, her younger friends hiding outside the restaurant would have rushed in and pulled Eunhee from her father's rough hands, clucked their tongues and told her how fearsome he was, and Eunhee would have gritted her teeth, their faces jumbling together in her shame and fury, and swore she wouldn't give in to bad feelings because of her parents or family.

That's what should have happened. And there was one more thing that should have happened. The combined protest a few days later should not have fallen through. Since it was already planned, they should have stuck it out, live or die, even if there was a security

leak and they were heavily surrounded by riot police and even if that happened, Eunhee should have gone straight to jail.

Instead what happened is that she wasn't arrested at the theater her father clutched Eunhee's hand once in his own cold hand at the *galbi* restaurant then left; and since all of the universities closed their classes after the combined protest was dispersed, it wasn't easy to organize another demonstration.

No, that's not right. Her friends gathered together those who were left and implicitly suggested having another sit-in somewhere in order to grant Eunhee, who was champing at the bit to go to jail, her wish to be sent to jail rather than live on the run. Back then, we were all in love with Muslim martyrs who charge into death with bombs clutched to their chests.

Well, that's what we should do, she thought. But her father, the image of her father from behind, took hold of Eunhee, who huddled shivering in a room with no coal, a rented room with no deposit, and wouldn't let her go. You have to fight again. You said you would never again be a fence-sitter. No, this isn't a fight, just a war of attrition. I don't care whether I go to jail or not, it's just a meaningless fight. You try to justify yourself by saying it's an objective situation, as if your own will has nothing to do with it, but no one will believe you. You're stepping back from the fight... because of your father's position. No, I'm not like that. Now, it's more important to quickly go to work undercover in a factory and set off a fight for the struggling workers, even if it's just one person for one day. No, that's just an excuse. In the end, you're choosing illegal work that looks okay for now because of your father's position. No, it's not that, it's not.

Eunhee told her friends she would see them later, and she turned her back, saying it was not for them but for history to judge. Then, as promised, she went to work undercover in a factory.

If her father had appeared before Eunhee then in his high and mighty uniform, the twenty-something year old Eunhee's life might have turned out a little differently. If that had happened, she might not have gone to that place that wasn't jail, and she might never have had that shocking meeting with her father.

"He got himself an audition without telling me. He'll need money, and people to care for him."

"Don't you think this is too much to ask? I hardly know the boy. If we take him, there'd be FBI agents following us everywhere we go. You'd never be able to see him. We're too old for this."

"Yeab, I think it's too much to ask. I have another son. He's 10. Harry."

"I heard about it on the news."

Maybe it wasn't just because of Eunsu's phone call. Did the fall sales at the department stores happen before or after? From some point on, Eunhee had started shopping at Lotte Department Store and Midopa Department Store instead of Namdaemun Market and Dongpyeonghwa Market, waiting for their seasonal sales and emerging with clusters of shopping bags that were too much for her hands to carry. This fall, as well, was no exception. She took her daughter who was old enough now to walk holding her hand to the toy section where there was a 20% discount on Lego and Little Tykes.

The child vanished. Her small hand, which should have been clasped in Eunhee's hand, disappeared. The moment she stepped foot in the department store, she became excited by all the new things and stubbornly tried to shake off her mother's hand since she had left her mother's grasp several times already, Eunhee had expected it would happen again.

Eunhee went to the store that sold the shaggy, mechanically barking dog that her daughter had gotten excited about. But she wasn't there. Babyra, Baby's Room, Moabang, Happy Land... she was nowhere to be found. People brushed past. Baby carriages, baby baths, and baby bottles whizzed by her. She called out her daughter's name.

"Heewon! Heewon!"

She peeked into the children's play area even though she knew her daughter could not possibly have climbed up. You never know, she might have met an older child and followed her in there. Children were laughing and running, but Heewon wasn't among them.

"Who, where is this child's mother?" Her ears suddenly perked up. She ran towards the sound. A young woman who worked at a children's clothing store was soothing a child. The moment she saw that it wasn't Heewon, Eunhee's legs lost the strength to hold her and folded beneath her.

Suddenly, one of her mother's stories whispered over and over in her ears. When you were around five years old, the whole household was in an uproar because I couldn't find you. Do you know what you said when I eventually found you at the police box? Your friend told you he saw your dad coming, so you went out to meet him.

Toddlers were all Eunhee could see. But Heewon was nowhere to be found.

"Heewon! Heewon!"

Her throat was dry. What if I never see her again? Foreboding thoughts took shape and kept rising up in her mind, but she shook her head hard and searched the fifth floor children's stores again and again.

Pull yourself together. She couldn't have gone far. Where did I lose her? Should I make a missing child announcement? What clothes did I dress her in this morning? People looking for a missing child always manage to remember that, but I can't even remember what color clothes I dressed her in with my own hands? Oh, little Heewon.

Heewon, Heewon, Heewon, she muttered through parched lips. A child was walking slowly off to one side. Denim pants, a denim jacket, and a yellow hat. Heewon, could that be my little Heewon? The child was standing there like she had just dropped down out of the sky. She wasn't there when Eunhee had searched the area several times over, so where could she have been?

"Heewon, where were you?"

Only then did she burst into tears. She hugged the child close.

"Do you know how worried Mommy was?"

The child sulked and refused to smile even when Eunhee hugged her, as if she knew the reason she was being scolded. Eunhee suddenly felt so embarrassed for getting carried away by the sales and bringing her child to such a chaotic place that she clutched the child to her chest and rushed out of the department store. At last, the child blinked up at her mother and smiled brightly. *Aigo*, my pretty baby.

It would have been around that time. There weren't many people renting videos, so she pulled "Running on Empty" out from the corner where it was tucked away and watched it again. She had been momentarily surprised to find an anti-war movie that didn't deal with the Vietnam War the same way as Oliver Stone's "Platoon" or "Born on the Fourth of July."

Watching the movie again, it seemed to Eunhee that what Sidney Lumet was trying to say was not just anti-war. A father who's president of the American Physics Society a daughter who's been living in hiding for close to twenty years, charged with blowing up a napalm research lab to protest the war and the daughter's son who's torn between his passion for music and his parents' beliefs. Pain and suffering was stretched over three generations. Her father, the police officer; Eunhee, the activist daughter; and now Heewon, the daughter who had turned a daughter into a mother.

Eunhee was suddenly overcome with thoughts of her daughter and instinctively pushed open the door and went into the room. Sleeping freely with arms outstretched, her daughter's face was the picture of peace. Eunhee resisted the urge to give her love bites, which she felt every time she saw her child's plump hands or chubby bottom. Could there be anything in this world prettier and more precious than my baby? As soon as Eunhee brought her lips to the child's cheek, the child softly opened both eyes, as if sensing that someone was around, and parted her lips to call for her mother.

"Mommy, Mommy!"

Woken from a light sleep, the child burst into sobs.

"That's right. Mommy's here. Mommy, Mommy."

Eunhee echoed her daughter's cries, then carried her into the store and walked slowly between the videos. "Under Fire," "Dr. Bethune," "Taxi Driver," "Mississippi Burning," "A River Runs Through It," "Norma Ray," "A League of Their Own"... and, off to one side, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" were tucked on the shelves.

"Are there any good movies?"

"Have you seen this one?"

"What's it called?"

"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, starring Jack Nicholson. It's pretty good. Funny, too."

"What's the story about?"

"Patients in a mental hospital..."

"A mental hospital?"

The young woman, whose blue jeans suited her well, winced at the words mental hospital. Eunhee assured her it was a funny movie and started to add that it was a social satire set in a mental hospital, but she stopped. If she opened her mouth, she might have started cussing. So what if it's a mental hospital, lady? People live there, too. And not just crazy people. Some are forced to go there by others, just like in this movie, even when there's nothing wrong with them!

"Father! Father! Let me go! What are you doing? What the hell! Get your hands off me. I'm an educated person. I said let go. Father!" She shouted and struggled, but the rough men who held her tightly under her arms only strengthened their grip. The moment she was shoved inside the cold, metallic iron door, her ears were struck by the strange, clamorous sound of a drum. The sound coming from the speakers was music. Eunhee's mind went completely blank except for wondering what she was hearing.

Eunhee came to well after she had been taken down the corridor and thrown into one of the rooms. When she lifted her head, the iron bars planted firmly before her struck her heart before her eyes.

"If you're an educated person, then you should act like one. Hand over your coat, scarf, and glasses!"

Like a person disarmed, Eunhee tamely followed the man's orders and unraveled her wool scarf, took off the long red coat that she had worn all winter long, and even removed

her glasses, which were like a part of her body. Two women on either side of the room were peeking out of blankets wrapped all the way up to their heads and looking at Eunhee. It seemed like they were going to fling their blankets aside at any moment and rush towards her. Mental hospital, crazy women, hysteria...

Am I crazy? Maybe I am crazy, considering that I've been shoved into a mental hospital. One, two, three, four... she counted up to one hundred. *Seonjeon*, propaganda! *Seondong*, agitation! *Dongweon*, mobilization! I still remember everything. So my memory is fine, but maybe other parts of my brain have shut down.

She had gone to work at the factory, just as she promised her friends she would. To be more specific, she had joined the team that was preparing to infiltrate the factory. She had memorized every paragraph of Lenin's "What Is to Be Done," and studied the historical development of the Korean labor movement as well as the present task at hand.

She took several interviews as a test. When she presented the identification card that had someone else's photo peeled off and her own affixed in its place, her heart pounded but the hand holding the card out luckily didn't shake. However, that wasn't the problem. Money, money was the problem. There was no money for rent, and no money to tide her over until she started getting a paycheck. No one on the team had money to spare. They had all either run away from their homes or were already employed but couldn't afford even the expenses for their activities from their meager paychecks.

She said goodbye to her team, declaring confidently that she would go home and get money for rent. Whether trusting her family for some reason, Eunhee—the same Eunhee who used to swig several bottles of *soju* on the way to the bus terminal every time she traveled from Seoul to Gwangju during college because it was stressful going home—had announced grandly that she would get the money, raising her voice and insisting that they trust her and let her go. Because she still remembered the cold shoulders of her father who had turned away.

Her family greeted the returning Eunhee with tears, and in order to fool them, she turned a Sim Soo Bong album up loud, put the factory dorm where she had done seminars on Lenin's "The State and Revolution" out of her mind for a few days, and slept and ate to her heart's content. When the Lunar New Year holiday was four days away, her father took Eunhee to Chungjangno Street to buy her clothes. Then, in front of the Sambok Bookstore, he said he had completely forgotten that he had to visit someone in the hospital, and suggesting they go there first, he put Eunhee in a chauffeured private car.

Pak's Department of Neuropsychiatry—Eunhee cocked her head in the hospital entrance. Before she could organize her thoughts, wondering who was hospitalized there

since Department of Neuropsychiatry meant it was a mental hospital, two sturdy men came running from the front door and grabbed Eunhee like an eagle snatching up a chick. Right before her father's eyes.

This was all planned; of all the people in the world, I shouldn't have trusted my own father. Eunhee sat crouching in the middle of the room. Father locked me away in here. In a mental hospital. Salty drops trickled down her cheeks. She felt afraid. Father, Mother, who must have known, the guy in charge of the hospital, the men who dragged me here, and who else, who else, who else...

Her tears flowed uncontrollably. This can't be happening. Go over it again, from the beginning, with a clean, fresh mind. The toilet and washroom were across the hall. There as well, thick iron bars were set in the windows with barely enough space for a single fist to move between them.

She splashed her face lightly with water, went back into the hallway, and was startled. A hazy object was moving heavily towards her, closing the distance. Dropping into a crouch and instinctively assuming a defensive posture, Eunhee heard something.

"Want a towel?"

"Oh, yes, thank you."

Eunhee laughed to herself. For the first time since arriving there, the image popped into her mind of her being dragged away by two strange men while calling out to her father and shouting that she was an educated person. Up until that point, the mental hospitals Eunhee knew of were full of alcoholics or those people who smile sweetly for no reason while pulling out their hair or who approach other people while snarling.

"My name is Hyeyoung, I'm in the next room. Come over if you get bored. Everyone is nice."

Eunhee unconsciously nodded her head, wondering how such a clear-minded person, especially one who would say that everyone is nice, wound up here in a mental hospital.

When Eunhee returned to her own room, one of the women turned to her with a crooked smile.

"It's cold, why don't you come over here?"

The room was indeed chilly. She gently lifted one edge of the blanket and covered her bottom.

"I noticed you were wearing glasses, so you must be a student. Coll...ege...student, right? A college student! There are other college students in here. There's no point in crying. They wouldn't put you in here if they were just going to let you out right away!"

The woman in the other corner who had been watching them suddenly shouted something indecipherable.

"That woman is totally crazy, stay away from her!"

It was confusing. The young woman who was pleading that she wasn't crazy was even more terrifying to Eunhee. In school, she used to memorize jokes to tell to others. Jokes about things like sparrows, frogs, mental hospitals. Weren't those jokes made all the funnier when the patients in the stories tried to prove they weren't crazy?

"Not everyone here is crazy, except for that woman, I mean. I was brought here because I'm depressed and still not married even though I'm over thirty. I locked the door, pissed and shit in a bedpan, and ate food that was passed to me through a crack in the door. I did that for about a month or so. Anyway, everyone hated the sight of me. My father said I was crazy and smashed down the door, came into the room, put me in the car, and brought me here. Are you here because of trouble with your parents? There are other people here because their, what do you call it, beliefs were different from their parents'. I'm guessing that was the case with you... Am I right? Is that what happened?"

Unsure of how she should respond, Eunhee settled on one thing from the woman's rant.

"Yes... our beliefs were different..."

"What school do you go to?"

"I'm in the X department at X University."

"Oh my, that's a tough school to get into, especially if you're from around here... I never really wanted to go to college. I failed the entrance exam a couple of times. It just didn't work out. My head must be full of rocks or something. Back then, everyone at my school had to cram to repeat the college entrance exam, and only one person got in. You went to high school here, right? Where?"

"X Girl's High School."

"Oh! I went there, too. I was there the third year after it opened!"

"I was there the tenth."

Before the school equalization policy, X Girl's High School was rumored to be a so-called third-tier school.

The sound of the iron door being opened with a key was followed by the sound of dragging slippers, which stopped suddenly in front of Eunhee's room.

"Here are your glasses. Don't think of this as a hospital but as a place to rest, and try to get your life in order! In a little while, I'll bring you a blanket and some clothes."

The lazy-eyed man who had dragged her in before talked to Eunhee like she was beneath him then went out.

"That guy, he's a pharmacist. He's stuck up and talks down to us. Treats innocent people like they're crazy."

The woman who had been crouched in the corner came towards them, dragging her blanket. In a moment, Eunhee's nose was stung by a bad smell, and every time the woman stirred, handfuls of dust and dried skin shook loose from the blanket, which was randomly covered in dried blood and bodily fluids.

"Fortuneteller, please take a bath. I'll even help you."

"Shut up! I'm not taking a bath until I get out of here. The Spirit told me not to bathe."

The woman, whose hair was parted down the center and pulled into a bun in the traditional style befitting a fortuneteller, shook her finger at Eunhee as if something was up.

"You look just like my younger sister."

"...How old is she?"

Eunhee asked carefully.

"I don't know, she's dead."

Eunhee's heart sank. Hearing that the woman's sister had died was enough to redirect Eunhee's senses, which had been focused in anger towards her father, back to society.

"If she were alive, she'd be the same age as you, girl."

The woman who had attended Eunhee's school before her shrieked.

"Who do you think you are, calling her girl? She's my friend now, so you call her Miss! M-i-s-s, you do know that word, right? And you can start calling me that now, too."

The fortuneteller smiled weakly and asked whether she was really young enough to be called Miss.

"All hell broke loose a few years ago, remember? My sister went out, and there's been no news of her since. She comes to me every night and says I have to kill the man who did it. I just have to get out of here first, so I can find him and kill him with my own hands. The thieves who run this hospital, they lock away innocent people in order to make money. They don't recognize a mother of the state like me... Spirit, please get me out of here!"

Gwangju would never be anything more than Gwangju. Back then, Eunhee was an eighteen-year-old girl in her second year of high school the younger sister who didn't come home would have been around the same age. The pretty little sister with bobbed hair still hadn't returned, and the older sister had lost her mind waiting for her.

"Don't pay attention to her. Crazy women like her belong in here. There are a few people here for worse reasons. There's a woman whose husband was obsessed with the idea that she was cheating on him and had her locked up, another woman who was hidden here by her family because her husband was beating her too much, and just a few days ago,

a woman covered in bruises from head to toe and on the verge of death spent the night here, hiding from her husband."

The sound of the iron door opening sharply, the sound of keys rattling, and the sound of slippers dragging made Eunhee unconsciously nervous. The sound stopped abruptly again outside Eunhee's room.

"Here's a blanket and some clothes, and stuff to wash your face with."

The blanket, the likes of which she had never seen at home, had her name, Yoo Eunhee, written in magic marker across the top in large letters. The nervousness that had temporarily subsided sprang back to life. Father isn't just trying to scare me. He really wants me to live here. Just how long does he intend to keep me here? Without Father's permission, I would have to live inside these thick iron bars under this tight supervision for several days, several months, or even several years. I could really go crazy this way. Eunhee wasn't sure she could bear it. Being of sound mind, in a place like this.

"That's a new blanket. So your name is Yoo Eunhee? I'm Seonja, Seonja."

Eunhee let out a sigh. Whether Seonja had guessed what Eunhee was feeling or not, she didn't forget to say comforting, helpful words, like a mentor.

"By the way, there's no use in trying to ask for favors from the men who work here, or banging on the door and asking them to hurry up and let you out. They'll just think you're crazier, and they'll put you in solitary instead. It must be really frustrating for you to be here since you go to such a good school, but you have to eat well and get along with other people if you want to get out of here faster. You see, the men who work here report everything to the doctor."

The first meal Eunhee received in that place consisted of one small dish of pale, watery *kimchi*, one bowl of radish soup, and one small dish of salted fish.

Not long after opening the video store, Eunhee had recommended "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" to a young woman who came into the store now and then. At the time, she was caught up in a certain sense of duty that compelled her to recommend a video that had meaning and artistic merit, rather than a pointless love story or a violent movie that treats people like flies. But the dumbfounded look on the girl's face at the thought of a movie about a mental hospital made Eunhee feel strange instead.

Just like Jack Nicholson's character McMurphy in "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest," Eunhee was given pills she had to take every morning. McMurphy asks the nurse. *What's in the horse pill? It's just medicine. It's good for you. Yea, but I don't like the idea of taking something if I don't know what it is. It's just that I don't want anyone to try and slip me saltpeter. If Mr. McMurphy doesn't want to take his medication orally, I'm sure we can arrange that he can have it some*

other way. In the end, he hides the pill under his tongue, but Eunhee, lacking that technique, first refused the medication then later took the pink and white pills every morning under the threat that if she did not obey she would be forced to take them. Every time she swallowed the pills, Eunhee believed that her father hoped she would go crazy or at least become slightly feeble-minded.

Murphy was many times freer than Eunhee. He changes the schedule, takes the other patients for a ride on a bus, sneaks out of the hospital, takes them on a boat, goes fishing...

What if Korean mental hospitals were made into a movie, and the women's ward, at that? What if they tracked how the women wound up there? Of course, there would be Eunhee, who was dragged there for the sake of her father's position; the sane wife who was locked away by her college professor husband; the woman in her twenties who couldn't overcome the shock of being raped and having a baby when she was young and had to be committed to the mental hospital; the woman in her thirties who came to the hospital for symptoms of hysteria and was raped by the doctors or male nurses, causing her to live out the rest of her life there instead... There were countless, untold stories as well as people kept under lock and key in that place.

"Get the bike out of the back. Now get on it."

"What are you talking about, Dad?"

"Get on the bike. You're on your own, kid. I want you to go to Juilliard."

"But, Dad, I want to go with you."

"Your mother has arranged things with your grandfather. Call him. And I think you have some friends around here. I love you, baby. We all love you. Now, go out there and make a difference. Your mother and I tried. Don't let anyone tell you any different."

"Goodbye, Danny!"

The younger brother Harry calls out to Danny, and they circle him once in the car before leaving in search of a hiding place away from the FBI agents in pursuit. Danny gets on the bicycle alone.

The movie, "Running on Empty," ended. Though she had seen it several times already, her eyes were brimming with tears. The baby had fallen fast asleep again in Eunhee's arms, and it was time to close the store shutters.

2

The child couldn't sleep. She caught a high fever in the middle of the night and called out with abandon for her mother. She had picked up a nasty cold. The doctor had warned her that when a healthy child gets sick once, they only suffer more. Time crept by. 4:00 a.m., 4:15, 5:20, 6:05—carrying her child, Eunhee's back ached like it was going to break. But Heewon kept doggedly reaching for her mother's back and cried convulsively as if burned whenever Eunhee tried to lay her on the mat, even after her back was warm and the child seemed to have fallen asleep.

Dawn broke, but Eunhee didn't leave even though the long-awaited time had come for the hospital doors to open at 9:30. She could rush over there any time before dark with the child on her back.

As soon as it was morning, the child who had been unable to sleep soundly even once and was having painful, rattling coughs like an old man fell into a deep sleep as if she had been lying all along. Eunhee smoothed the child's sweat-damped hair with her hand and brought her lips several times to her ruddy, flushed cheeks, then rested her hands on top of her child's soft, chubby hands. She listened to the sound of her rough, irregular breaths.

The sleeping child grumbled a few times when Eunhee was dressing her, but she quieted again when she was put on her mother's back. Though rush hour had ended, it wasn't easy to catch a cab, perhaps because of the might of the winter wind that was brushing past the tip of her nose. Eunhee jumped up and down, patted the child's back, then looked at her watch, stepped into the street, and waved her hand.

"The airport, please. Cross Youngdong Bridge and take Olympic Highway."

As soon as she got in the cab, Eunhee gave the directions in one breath like someone who had practiced it in advance. While doing so, she recalled the lines delivered by Holly Hunter's character Jane, a program director in the movie *Broadcast News*, when she gets in a cab after leaving her boyfriend Tom. *Dupont Circle, please. Don't take the beltway, because at this time of day there's gonna be a lot of...* Jane continues speaking in a weary voice, as she has just turned her back on her beloved who has abandoned his ethics as a news announcer in order to get ahead, sending him off on vacation alone. *...Go any way you want.*

"Lady, Olympic Highway is really backed up. It would be much faster to take Cheonggye Highway."

The taxi driver looked slyly in the rearview mirror at the middle-aged woman carrying a baby on her back.

"But the other way is usually better..."

Since there had been a taxi driver who dragged a housewife into the hills and raped her because she got angry at him for refusing to drive all the way to her mountaintop house, Eunhee purposely let her words trail off at the end so as not to upset the driver. It was humiliating. A strong woman who had chosen her own work and cause rather than clinging to love, Jane's next lines were... *But New York Avenue's faster.*

"Well, they say the customer is always right. So let's go your way."

He opened the window and spat hard. The cold air raised goose pimples on her daughter's skin.

Traffic was stop and go as usual on Dongil Road, which never saw a day when it wasn't backed up. Youngdong Bridge was indeed a bridge too far.

"Look at this, Cheonggye Highway would have been much faster. Lady, taxi drivers always know best. Since when do passengers know better?"

He kept slamming on the brakes in irritation, as if the traffic were all Eunhee's fault. Don't you know that Cheonggye Highway is under construction right now, and one lane is closed? The question was right on the tip of her tongue, but Eunhee managed to keep her mouth shut. If she said anything, she would just have to work hard to kiss up to an angry taxi driver.

Eventually, they reached the entrance to Youngdong Bridge. It was truly a bridge too far. The Han River was flowing east. Strange, they say the Han River flows into the West Sea. A pleasure boat was floating on the right where the Seongsu Bridge had collapsed. Eunhee's eyes briefly clouded over. Her younger sister Eunsu had once laughingly said she wanted to take a pleasure boat ride. But since Eunhee had spent her twenties hating that song about a pleasure boat floating on the river water with scattered clouds in the sky and so on, she jokingly refused each time Eunsu talked about it. What's the point of paying money to look at that shitty water? But now, it made Eunhee's heart choke up like there was a thorn stuck in her throat. The sense of romance and vague nostalgia that all students who came to Seoul from the countryside initially felt about the Han River had been felt even more by Eunhee. Whenever she went home to Gwangju, dozing off on the #141 bus from Shinchon that passed Samgakji and Itaewon and crossed the Han River to reach the Gangnam bus terminal, she would instinctively open her eyes when they drew near the river.

The car was moving slowly. What if Eunsu already left the country by the time we reach the airport?

"...Couldn't you wait until Father has his surgery, then go? There are only a few days left."

"Hmph... what's the point of waiting?"

On the other end of the telephone, her younger sister was breathing faintly, almost imperceptibly.

"Then, before you go, come stay with me or something. You said you had to move out of your room."

"Don't feel like it... I don't want to owe anyone anything."

This time, Eunhee's breaths lengthened. Eunsu's voice was awkwardly high. Eunheeknew that her sister was saying that on purpose, that she didn't want to leave behind even a shred of love in this land she was leaving with disgust, but inwardly, Eunhee couldn't accept it.

"So, where do you plan to stay? Women don't belong in motels."

"Sis, for goodness' sake..."

Whatever Eunsu was planning to say, she stopped. She probably wanted to say that even Eunhee couldn't avoid becoming part of the older generation. Considering that she was worried about where she should sleep.

"Eunsu, if that's really the case, then just stay at my house the night before you leave and let's go to the airport together. The rest of the family is in a flurry because of Father, so they probably won't be able to see you off even though you're going so far away."

She didn't mind begging. What in the world did it matter if she begged and pleaded with her younger sister, given that she didn't know when she would return or if she was ever coming back at all?

"Don't complicate things. I said I would go alone..."

Was it her imagination, or did Eunsu's last words sound a little teary?

Once the 63 Building came into view, shining like gold, the car began to pick up speed. Having disappeared briefly under Yeouido Island, the river widened considerably and was following Eunhee again without pause.

The first time Eunhee heard that Eunsu was taking steps to study abroad in the U.S., and not from Eunsu herself but from their mother, Eunhee couldn't believe her ears. What did you say, Mom? It's the truth! She had had to repeat it several times.

Many people had left for the United States in the name of studying abroad, and still others had gone in order to set down roots. That was the harsh reality of the Republic of Korea. However, no matter how many people left like that, Eunhee had never imagined her sister would be one of them, and she still couldn't shake her conviction that it wasn't right.

When Eunhee first heard that Eunsu—the Eunsu that had hung the banner of anti-American resistance in the name of the national anti-foreign power, anti-dictatorship

patriotic students' coalition and single-handedly held her ground for three days and three nights at Konkuk University, the same Eunsu who had been arrested in the social sciences building, which had seen the most violent fighting up until the end and had the most wounded—was leaving to study in the United States, a country she had gnashed her teeth in hatred against, the thought even crossed her mind that their mother might have accidentally switched Eunsu's name with one of the other siblings, like Eunhye or Eunjeong.

She went so far as to guess that Eunsu's return to the family bosom two years prior after having cut off any contact with her family following the incident, as if raising a white flag, was probably a strategic move in preparation for leaving the country. The incident in question was not the one where Eunsu spent some time in the Uijeongbu prison for participating in the Konkuk University protest, but the one right after she got out, when she spent the winter in the same Gwangju mental hospital that Eunhee had lived in exactly one year before. Immediately after taking various measures to have Eunsu released, their father had her mercilessly locked away. Eunhee, who was working in a factory and had all but severed contact with her family, only found out later, after Eunsu had come out of the hospital.

A stiff breeze licked past Eunhee's forehead. It was a cold winter wind. Winter, to Eunhee, was a frighteningly cruel season. Looking back, it seemed like all those painful events that had gnawed away at her heart for so long afterwards had all taken place during the winter. Becoming a fugitive and wandering the streets aimlessly with a gaunt face, being cruelly locked away in a mental hospital by her father, her younger sister being sent to the same place—it had all happened in winter.

How did Eunsu overcome that brutal winter, and in such a completely different way than Eunhee? Though Eunheehad had no choice but to take the pills they gave her, her sister said she didn't take even a single one of those pointless mystery pills. She naturally refused to follow orders, do or die. Though Eunhee didn't immediately get along with the other people in the hospital, that wasn't the case for Eunsu. Even the fact that Hye-young had lost her mind after being raped and giving birth to a child at a young age was something Eunhee heard later from her sister. Eunsu, who was always brave and strong wherever she went, passed the winter easily there, too.

When the car reached Kimpo Airport, traffic slowed again. The child shifted in her arms and complained. She patted her on the back then turned to look out the window where a bleak winter field was spread. Winter was passing. Eunsu was leaving the country, their father...

Of course, Eunhee had been there as a window of contact between Eunsu and the family. However, Eunsu didn't show up even when her one and only older sister was getting married and when her younger sister got married before her, she didn't show her face then either. During that time, while drifting back and forth to Masan and Busan, Eunsu had first started working in the factories then later worked for a labor organization. What was Eunhee doing when Eunsu was toiling in a factory and even in the area around the factory? She got married, opened a video store because she wanted work of her own, and had a child. Of course, all of her financial support came from their father. He gave her the money for the apartment and got her the store. When Eunsu moved to Seoul, was that around the time she heard field reports from her predecessors that Eastern Europe was collapsing, or was it after they had experienced several crushing political defeats despite having a president who was chosen by the people themselves? Eunsu found a room near the school and started going to class again, and she began stacking such-and-such TOEFL books that she had never paid attention to before in one corner of her boarding room. Of course, her financial support came from their father as well. In the end, even Eunsu had kneeled before him.

The dry tree branches stretching from the earth outside the window must be forsythia. Even while breathing the foul air of Seoul and the exhaust from countless cars, the flowers wouldn't fail to bloom in spring. Did Eunsu also see the parched struggle of the forsythia? What could be preventing her from living here, sending her to a far-off foreign land, and a country that she had opposed with raised fists at that?

They hadn't arranged to meet in any particular place, but where might she find her in the crowded international terminal? At a loss, Eunhee went blindly up the escalator. Even in this confusing forest of people, Eunsu would have managed to find a spot that wasn't crowded, and would be standing apart and alone like a secluded island.

When the escalator went as high as it would go, Eunhee stopped and straightened the baby out on her back. Eunsu was there. Sitting in an out of the way spot in a restaurant, she was looking at the hazy winter sky outside the window and fiddling with a paper cup. Eunhee felt a sharp ache in her heart. Suddenly, the question, or rather, the feeling that maybe she wasn't leaving for America, that what she wanted was to take off for anywhere that wasn't here, gnawed at her. Eunhee drew closer, but Eunsu didn't immediately notice her presence.

"Mom is really worried, sending you off alone."

The words that sprang out of her mouth of their own accord while she was sinking into a chair sounded strange to Eunhee. Couldn't she have said something a little kinder to her?

"I told you not to come... Just because Mom worries like that all the time doesn't mean you have to go to all this trouble, even carrying Heewon here on your back like a country bumpkin."

Each time Eunsu spoke, the smell of cigarettes wafted out from inside her mouth. The smell of alcohol was mingled in there as well. Eunsu was acting cross, but Eunhee knew she was just worried about herself and others.

"...Were you drinking?"

Normally, Eunhee would have rudely said, "you crazy bitch, you've been drinking," but on this day, Eunsu looked small and frail, as if she would wither away if Eunhee hugged her.

You're not a feisty hot pepper but a tender child who's miserable and helpless without alcohol or cigarettes. Why did I always believe that you could hold your ground and put up with more because you were stronger than me, your big sister?

"I went to Maseok. I went yesterday afternoon and could have just come right back..."

Tears spread in Eunsu's eyes. No, her eyes were red to begin with.

"But I couldn't. I visited him again in the morning and had a drink on my way back..."

"...Is he well?"

Eunhee's voice went dry.

"Yeah, someone did a nice job of weeding his grave. I'm good at that, too, now."

Eunsu raised her head and grinned at Eunhee. Her cold smile tore mercilessly at Eunhee's heart.

"Before that, I went to Busan... Jin's mom told me to forget all about him and find someone good to marry. I didn't tell her I'm going to America. Even though she'll find out someday. Do you know why I went there? It wasn't to say goodbye. The truth is... I wanted to tell her. That I was the one who started the coal fire in Jin's boarding room the night before. I'm the one who killed her son..."

"That's enough, it wasn't your fault. That's how it was back then. We set fire to our own bodies, got sucked into the machines in the factory, was struck with tear gas, and coal gas..."

Eunsu was shaking her head hard.

"...I don't like the sound of that. 'Back then.' How can you of all people talk that way? ...The party's over, and now even the dishes are done?"

Eunsu pulled a cigarette from her pocket and put it in her mouth.

You know as well as I do that there are people who joined arms and snooped around next to the demonstrators, who are now raising their voices and calling themselves experts, writing novels about the love affairs of activists and calling it such-and-such phenomena.

"So what about you..."

Eunsu wouldn't have said those words out loud if she weren't blowing cigarette smoke away from Eunhee. She was suppressing the words hard, but when she exhaled smoke while muttering cynical remarks, they popped out without her even realizing it.

"My boyfriend who worked in a factory is long dead from coal gas, and the movement banner has fallen to the ground. So why don't I just get out of here or something. That must be how I decided to head for America. That's what you think, isn't it? But you misunderstand me... I never turned my back on the cause."

That's what they all say. They say the banner could never be lowered, that no one could be free of the '80s. A bitter smile spread across Eunhee's mouth.

"Don't smile like that. Do you know why I'm leaving right away and not waiting until after Father's surgery? How could someone strong enough to stuff his activist daughters away in a mental hospital have cancer? Does that make sense? I don't want to forgive him yet. It's not right. No matter how much this crazy world drove him to it, you just can't do that to your daughters."

What does it matter now whether we forgive him or not? At any rate, even though he did that to his own children, Father became police chief at a hard cost, and aren't you using the money he stockpiled from that to study abroad now? It's all just old history now, going on ten years.

"I'll say it again. I don't feel the need to explain to you word for word...even these words feel meaningless now, but when did I close my heart to you...?"

If you leave, will that make it all better? You're freely opening your mouth now about the unspoken truth that existed tacitly between us. It was after the incident. Eunsu came looking for Eunhee to ask if she could donate money to the construction of the worker's hall. Whenever friends and successors who had cut off all communication with her for several years found her information somehow and asked her for donations to this and that aid association, Eunheegot annoyed at their typically amateurish attempts and, feeling a surge of exasperation at them for trying to shift the responsibility for an historical debt to others, immediately shoved the direct deposit forms they sent her in the trashcan. She made no exceptions for Eunsu. If it were for your living expenses, I could help you out to some extent since you're my little sister, but I don't want to donate any money to an aid association.

"The reason I'm leaving to study abroad... is because I want to become a strong person."

The veins in Eunsu's temples stood out. The baby gave a rattling cough and cried out on Eunhee's back, causing her to jump up and soothe her. The gate number for Eunsu's plane was being announced over the loudspeakers. Eunsu crushed her cigarette out in the paper cup.

"I'm sorry for all that happened... I'll write to you."

Setting the bag straps on her shoulder, Eunsu stooped over and straightened up again.

"Little Heewon, listen to your mother and grow up healthy. Later, I'll buy you all your favorite things. Sister, I'll go now. Take care..."

Eunsu slowly kissed Heewon on the cheek.

"Eunsu! Take care of yourself, and study hard the things you wanted to study..."

Tears sprang up in Eunhee's eyes. Finally it seems the words will come pouring out with you. I feel like I could spend the day staring into your eyes that still shine the way they did long ago when we used to listen to the Sunflower tape and stay up all night chatting and nibbling Ace crackers under the light of the desk lamp, when we were new to Seoul and living by ourselves. You're not the one who should say sorry, it's me... The words are rising up in my chest, but now you have to leave.

"Call me when you get there."

That isn't what I wanted to say. Get everything off your chest with me then go. Why couldn't you have talked to me sooner? I still understand you, regardless of what you say. Carrying the single bag, Eunsu's shoulders were terribly thin. Eunsu took a few steps towards the gate then slowly returned to Eunhee.

"Sis... you're going to go see Father, right?"

Sis, that's what Eunsu was calling her. Lately, she had only heard that word that scraped the edges of her heart with its long echo from the mouth of her daughter. Though she hadn't taught it to Heewon, who was going on two years now, she would often call out Sis, stretching the sound out, when she saw little girls who were older than her. When was the last time Eunsu called me that? Long ago, when they lived together, Eunsu sometimes tossed and turned in her sleep and talked in a mumble behind Eunhee's back. Sis... life is hard.

Eunhee took Eunsu's hand instead of answering her question. Her cheeks were wet with tears. Eunsu wiped the tears away with her fist, turned her back, and ran through the open door. That's how her sister left.

As she was putting Heewon on her back again, something Eunsu had said to her once echoed in Eunhee's ears. The day she said she wouldn't donate even a single penny to the aid association, Eunsu had drunk her fill of alcohol, letting her tears fly, and spoke to Eunhee.

Sister, you shouldn't live that way... Don't live that way... Shaking the *soju* glass, Eunsu had said spat out the word "you." After that, she never drank alcohol or let her tears flow in front of Eunhee again.

With the child on her back, Eunhee stood in line at the taxi stand before turning her steps toward the reserved-seat buses when an airplane flew overhead, letting out a loud boom. She must be walking up the ramp right about now. The tears that haven't dried yet are falling in drops to where her feet are kicking up dust. Farewell... my little sister, and wash away your tears now.

3

She dipped her whole body into the warming water. Her eyes had opened right at dawn. She didn't wake up on purpose. Since Heewon was sleeping soundly, she quietly filled the tub with water and got in after pouring several dippers of water over herself. She had turned the boiler on to heat the water and the tub was more than halfway full, when she remembered that her father's operation was today.

She didn't purposely look at the last knuckle on the little finger of her left hand, but merely glanced at it while clasping her hands together since there was nowhere to put them in the water. The scar wasn't conspicuous if you weren't trying to look for it.

There was one incident in particular that made Eunhee give into despair after she was shockingly forced into the hospital by her father, and that was her meeting with him. She wasn't in handcuffs with a glass door with holes all over it placed between them, nor did they meet in the lobby near the front door since she was an escape risk instead, she met her father in the dining room located behind her room. When will you let me out of here? Eunhee skipped the greetings and asked her father straightaway the moment she saw him. There are a lot of problems right now because of the situation in the Philippines. And, on top of that, the opposition party is considering revising the constitution. So, when? The time hasn't come yet for you to leave, so just be patient a little longer. This "time" you're talking about, when will it come? The students will be acting up again when school starts, and you know the anniversary of the uprising is coming up in May! Father, you want me to go crazy and spend the rest of my life in here, don't you? Eunhee's eyes pooled with tears

as she began to raise her voice. At a wave of her father's hand, the men immediately appeared, dragged Eunhee away, and shoved her into her room.

Hope vanished.

She had believed it would be a few days—now that she was there, she accepted it as a fait accompli—questioning whether they could really expect her to spend the winter there, even if it was her parents. The hope that her father would sympathize with her plight, smile gently, and take her hand and leave with her was long forgotten. Eunhee had to plan her escape.

She learned what the best choice was for a person reduced to the extreme of suicide and who has no other way out. It was the best insofar as injuring part of your body or your whole body is a task much easier said than done. It demanded a kind of determination. But back then, what Eunhee settled on was much closer to a demonstration than determination more than the conviction that she could get out of there, it was a test of her own courage to prove she wouldn't just cave in.

In that place no different from a prison, where everything that could be used as a weapon had been removed, what Eunhee found was a metal rice bowl used for drinking medicine. Taking advantage of the time when people were napping, she blocked the door with a towel to keep any sound from escaping the washroom, and while one self that shouted for her to stop fought with another self that said she couldn't leave until she had succeeded in cutting off her finger, she brought the sharp edge of the metal bowl down again and again. In the end, the finger didn't sever. With the water turned up high to cover any noise and her bruised finger wrapped in a towel, she was nothing more than a castrated twenty-four-year-old wailing mutely.

But, stroking the finger that was left with only a wicked scar, Eunhee was too young to just give in and wipe away her tears. She was pure enough to still have the courage to run through fire. The courage to run through fire... When did it disappear without a trace, and she started fearing the world, and people? Back then, Eunhee had chanted to herself. A more careful and scientific method!

I'll try saying I'm pregnant. It was a shortcut to becoming a typical immoral activist and a form of sexual manipulation worthy of being written up in a prosecution statement, but first she just had to get out of there. In truth, however, the bigger problem was overcoming her sense of shame.

She had one-on-one talks once a week with the director of the hospital, a psychiatrist. The day before she was supposed to meet with him, she sent a note to the doctor through a male nurse. He usually asked typical, polite questions—how was she doing, what was she thinking about, and so on—but now the doctor immediately asked her.

"Why do you think you're pregnant?"

He, of the important title from the National Medical Council and a comically receding hairline, pushed his glasses up out of habit.

"...I didn't have a... period... this month."

Her clasped hands were shaking. She unclasped them and clenched her fists.

"When do you get your period?"

Eunhee deliberately gave cold responses to his businesslike questions.

"Who's the guy?"

Is it my duty to answer this? Her father was questioning her now through the doctor's mouth. Eunhee told him the name of a guy who was on the same team as her.

"Was that your first time with a man?"

He was clearly enjoying the questions. There was no longer any need to be shy or bashful. He wasn't a doctor treating a patient but a petty detective conducting an interrogation while hiding a smirk, and Eunhee was a prisoner dragged before him in chains, being interrogated.

"Don't you regret it? Since you're damaged..."

So, winged animals are not the only things that can fall.

"I, have, no, regrets."

"If you are pregnant, what will you do?"

"...I'll get rid of it."

He said it was a good idea and rattled off a heated, impassioned speech like a speaker at a revival service, going on and on about how children are a blessing to society. Eunhee, who stared at his constantly moving mouth and endured the rigorous time by imagining lighting *soju* bottles filled with paint thinner, ended up thinking of one person who would actually be suffering countless volleys of Molotov cocktails. A middle-aged man who was making his daughter shake with shame over her first menstrual period in front of another middle-aged man. A man who was head of the security division in a downtown Gwangju police station charged with the life-or-death mission of putting down the demonstrations who had hid inside a cabinet while wearing a police uniform in Gwangju in May of 1980 for whom the urgent, most important problem of his life of whether to advance to police chief or retire from his position would be settled this winter... her father.

Her daughter continued to sleep even as Eunhee soaped herself, rinsed off, and came out of the tub. She went into the living room and turned on the TV and VCR, turning the volume down as far as possible. The deadline for her video review was fast approaching. Police were firing on the demonstrators. Young students spilled their blood and collapsed, then were beaten with clubs like dogs and dragged away. The movie was

Morgan Freeman's directorial debut, "Bopha!," which dealt with conflict and reconciliation between the sergeant of a police department and his son, who takes part in a demonstration.

While watching movies, Eunhee was sometimes awestruck by the fact that the five billion people on earth, each from different natural and cultural environments, could share the same emotions through the medium of a movie screen. There were the fun and thrills of watching "Jurassic Park," the cause of justice and victory in "Music Box," and the warm humanity of "Hero." How fortunate it was that humanity still had something in common, things like movies, music, art, or dance.

"Bopha!" made Eunhee shiver for that reason as well. Strictly speaking, the only differences were that it was set in the Republic of South Africa rather than the Republic of Korea, the skin color was black not yellow, and the father was a low-ranking sergeant otherwise, the father's arguments or the son's words as he heads out to fight could have been taken directly from Eunhee and her father's mouths ten years earlier. But Eunhee couldn't find any Korean movies worth using for the theme she was writing about. "Guro Arirang," "They, Like Us," "The Night Before The Strike," "Cutting The Sorrow With A Knife Stuck In The Chest," "The Song Of Resurrection"... Could she write a movie review based on a theme, having only managed to find two movies that fit the subject? On the other hand, she couldn't be sure. There might be more hidden away somewhere.

On the day of the funeral for the people shot by the police, the father is killed by a crowd of demonstrators. It happens even though he goes there to keep watch over his son, albeit from afar, and to confess his crimes to him. He is not even given the opportunity to take hold of his son's hands and beg forgiveness. Perhaps his repentance came too late. Or perhaps, even if you stop what you're doing, you can only be judged by history.

"Heewon, Grandpa is hurt, so we're going to the hospital now."

She wrapped a scarf around the girl's neck and pressed a knit cap firmly onto her head. At her mother's words, the child, who was as puffy as a snowman from all the layers of clothing Eunhee had dressed her in, suddenly turned her body with a jerk in front of the door and tottered over to the dresser in the bedroom. She pressed a tube of ointment into her mother's hand and pointed demandingly to her own nose. Eunhee was pretending to squeeze the tube, just as her daughter was urging her to do, when she remembered that Heewon had recently fallen on the concrete in front of the house for some time after, Eunhee would apply the ointment to the scratch on her nose while saying, "Heewon got hurt." Eunhee's throat choked up, and she hugged the child suddenly, saying, "That's right, Grandpa is hurt."

When they came downstairs to the entrance of the apartment building, rain was dripping off the dry cherry branches above them. When the delicate, pale pink blossoms are in full bloom on the branches of that seemingly dried-up cherry tree, Heewon will be two years old. On that day over ten years ago as well, the whole earth was drenched with rain, ushering in spring.

She had gotten rid of everything she scribbled in her notebook during those days. "I played cards with Seonja today and lost twice. The fortuneteller didn't eat for several days, so the men came and shoved a rubber hose in her. How can they treat people like that, like they're animals? Watching furtively from the corner as she struggled, the anger that went away flared up again. I can hear children playing in the alley outside the iron bars. Hey kids, you can't keep shouting and playing like that when your mothers are calling for you to come in and eat dinner. If the window is open, I can see the men's ward a little over there. They must see me, too, because they wave and yell. I wonder how they wound up here." She tore up the notebooks in which she had searched her memory to jot down the date and giddily scribbled incoherent passages, and ate the pages. They had given her a notebook and pencil, as Eunhee requested, when it was determined that she had been tamed into a docile beast and would no longer try to escape. Writing everything down was her lonely struggle to stay alert and not go crazy. She got rid of all the records written in blood and tears. Was it because she thought they were embarrassing? Or because she had some kind of premonition?

It was a Sunday morning. Since there was nothing she could do there after deciding not to write anymore, Eunhee took her breakfast tray and lay down again. She fell back to sleep.

"Yoo Eunhee, you have a visitor."

At first she thought she was dreaming. Seonja was next to her, shaking her awake.

"Eunhee, they say you have a visitor. How nice. I wonder who it is. No one comes to visit me."

She went out into the hallway in her baggy sweats, dragging her slippers. But the man they said was a pharmacist who was walking ahead of Eunhee didn't go to the dining room next to her room, but opened the iron door instead and took her to the front door of the hospital. Sitting in the lobby were a friend's older sister whom she had met briefly somewhere once and a strange man. The letter she had pressed into the hands of a patient who was discharged a few days before, pleading for her to send it, was in the girl's hand. The girl put bread and milk on the table and spoke quickly.

"Let's talk later. There's a motorcycle outside with the motor running. Walk over slowly and get on it. That's all you have to do."

The pharmacist had gone behind the reception window and was spreading open a newspaper.

"I can do that."

Eunhee smiled with her teeth showing. If that's all it takes, I have confidence. I can pretend to be calm and unfazed in the face of danger. The girl patted her on the back and handed her a black sweater that she seemed to have prepared in advance.

Eunhee held the sweater in her hand and walked slowly, very slowly, out the hospital door. The young man was puffing a cigarette on top of a motorcycle with the engine rumbling right in front of her. As soon as Eunhee hugged his waist, he snapped the cigarette away. The motorcycle took off. She turned her head and looked back. There was the hospital where she had been locked up.

"Thank you."

"But are you really the one who was in that mental hospital? You look pretty sane to me."

She laughed out loud. Rain was falling over the Gwangju River that flowed with jet-black wastewater, over the running motorcycle, and into Eunhee's wide-open mouth. Rain, it's raining. Spring has come. Tears and raindrops ran down Eunhee's haggard cheeks.

McMurphy from "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" succeeded at getting his revenge by taking over the nurse's station and announcing it was medication time over the microphone, but he was unable to escape that place and stayed there until the end. Eunhee, however, wound up succeeding. As did Eunsu. Perhaps the saying that younger brothers can never live up to their older brothers would have to be revised. Eunsu said it snowed a lot on the day she escaped. In the hospital, they let trustworthy patients take the trash out, so Eunsu chose that as her escape method. Like Eunhee, Eunsu also sent a letter to a friend through a patient who was being discharged. One snowy day, the woman who normally took the trash out didn't want to do it, so Eunsu, with trashcans in hand, was able to escape with the help of friends who had been lying in wait for four days or so. Jin, who is now buried in Maseok, was forced to throw a brick that was lying nearby at the male hospital workers who kept chasing after them, but he was lucky that it narrowly missed one of the men's faces and fell near his hand instead. He hadn't lost his ability to hurl stones.

Pushing open the door to the infirmary after glancing over the room numbers hung in front of the door, Eunhee almost took her child's hand and left again. The person lying in a hospital gown was not her father. Yet, that was clearly her father lying there. The strangeness and sense of despair that Eunhee felt when she first learned her father had cancer swept over her again. A person like our father could never have cancer. He was the kind of person who could make even a cancer cell shake its head and turn away in surprise

at meeting such a diehard. His face was deeply lined with wrinkles, and his undyed hair was a haphazard mixture of black, brown, and silver.

Eunhee knew her father better than anyone else. Having served in the police force while attending night school, her father was the definition of a self-made man and a Korean man of will. Every time there was a test for promotions, he stayed up all night studying, and when emergency orders were announced, he didn't even show his face at home for one or two months at a time.

But her father's success wasn't achieved solely through his integrity and passion. Whenever a holiday or regular promotional period was coming up, he and Eunhee's mother would go around to the people who might be of some good and offer them envelopes of money, and whenever he received an expensive gift, he immediately gave it as a bribe to people above him. As he climbed further step by step, he handed down the process of promotion intact to those beneath him. He kept careful records of the items or amounts that people brought him and reflected it in their performance evaluations. The typical approach to interpersonal relationships by people who succeeded in Korean society of obsequiously currying favor with people higher than oneself while talking down to people who are even slightly lower and treating them like servants came all too naturally to her father.

But now, with surgery looming over him...he was far more wretched and broken than William Hurt's character in "The Doctor," who was a talented, ambitious surgeon suddenly reduced one day to an ordinary patient diagnosed with throat cancer.

"Hey, your father is getting surgery, and you only now show up?"

Her father spoke first to Eunhee, who was confused and unable to offer even a proper greeting of some kind.

"Do you know why your father has cancer? My two oldest daughters! It's all because of you two. You squeezed the life out of me and made me this way... Do you feel better now?"

"I'm sorry..."

Did she just apologize? Was this, too, a reflection forced by the situation? She must have said it only in order to say the next words. It wasn't our fault. Society made us this way.

"You're sorry now that your father is dying?"

What could have made her father so strong? Was it that he still had a prominent position, or a sense of confidence borne out of fulfillment of his duties as a father to raise his children and lead his family?

"Father, you're strong, so the surgery will go well."

Her father was indeed strong. He sent one daughter to a mental hospital in order to become chief of police, and sent another daughter to the same place to maintain that position. But perhaps his daughters were stronger. They succeeded in escaping and rebelling against their father's loyalty.

"Of course, it will. You're all grown up now. Now that you're raising a child of your own, do you understand how your father feels?"

Glancing up at the clock on the wall, her father's tone faltered.

"Well, well. Eunhee, I finally quit smoking yesterday."

"Father, you said you quit for over ten days."

She had asked him about his smoking over the telephone, pretending to take an interest since she was left with nothing else to say after inquiring about his health.

"That's right, but I was nervous about the surgery coming up..."

When she told her sister about their father's cancer, Eunsu's deep sigh had traveled over the telephone line and transferred to Eunhee's throat. Why was she leaving the country in such a hurry, all while asking Eunhee if she was going to see their father? Though rationally, she couldn't forgive him, perhaps she was afraid of what she might feel, calling out and weeping with abandon, when she saw her father dressed in a hospital gown.

When he was put on the gurney and taken to the surgery room on the first floor, her father's pupils whirled up at the ceiling of the elevator in abject fear like an animal caught by a hunter. The look in his eyes was so similar to the eyes of her daughter when she woke up from sleeping and searched anxiously about the room for her mother, that Eunhee felt an ache in the pit of her stomach. At the entrance to the surgery room, Eunhee held her daughter's hand in one hand and her father's violently trembling hand in the other. Her father's hand was softer and warmer than she expected.

They said the surgery would take around ten hours. The other family members left to find a Buddhist temple where they could pray, and Eunhee thought about heading back to the store for a while before returning.

What kind of relationship do Father and I have? Back then, she hated her father, swearing through clenched teeth that she would never see him again after leaving that place, and that she could never forgive a father who would lock his sane daughters away in a mental hospital. Eunsu would have been the same, too. As a result, nearly six years passed without any communication. But did she really hate her father as she had vowed to herself she would? Did she not quietly extend a hand of reconciliation? On her wedding day, did she not enter the wedding hall holding her father's hand like any other bride, and when she found out her father had cancer, did she not beat her chest and wail? It was the same with him. He gave her the money for an apartment, and he gave her furniture. Did she dare say

it was nothing more than an entente with a father who had amassed a fortune, that it was merely a relationship formed again between a father and daughter because of money? Wasn't the relationship between a parent and child something more than just a problem of survival?

Maybe now she could truly forgive him. But was the word forgiveness appropriate between parent and child? Wasn't forgiveness something a father owes the prodigal child who has returned, rather than something the child owes the father? If only the day would come when there would be no need to forgive or be forgiven because of things people were unavoidably compelled to do, things that weren't their fault. All the more so between a parent and child. You have to get well again... Oh, Father.

"Hurt, Grandpa is hurt."

The child wiggled her small, soft hand where it was held firmly in Eunhee's hand and mumbled. She held the child tight and rubbed her cheek. The child burst into laughter with a sound like rolling beads.

"Mommy, mommy."

Whether because she was feeling better, the child kissed Eunhee right on the lips. What kind of parent will I be to my pretty baby? Or rather, what kind of mother will this world make of me?

When the rain ends, will Father's winter end, too?

Translated from the Korean by Sora KIM-Russell
