

FOCUS



EXT. ANYANG, MARKET - NIGHT

Cold. Wet. Dim.

Plastic stall roofs flap in the crisp wind, shaking off traces of rain so everything is covered in dampness.

In a crowd of faceless people, one person stands out.

KANG SEO JOON - thirty seven, as gloomy as the weather, carrying a ratty duffel bag - ambles through the market, gaze pensive.

Stalls of various delicacies try to tempt him closer, but Seo Joon walks straight past, ignoring the hands extending to offer free samples.

His surroundings are full of life, but he remains apathetic to it all.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANYANG, STREET - CONTINUOUS

SEO JOON crosses the street, no attempt to look left or right, and takes a turn past the karaoke rooms and bowling alley.

Flashy neon signs, scattered all over the buildings, light his way.

He throws passing glances through the windows, stepping into the puddles stretching over the street.

Seo Joon's eyes linger as he approaches the red light district, nameless men being sweet-talked inside adult establishments.

He takes a moment to contemplate, as a pair of heels click clacks towards him.

His feet move away though, guiding Seo Joon past, up the hill. He gets further and further from any signs of life.

Seo Joon slows his pace, throwing glances around as if begging for something - anything - suitable to appear to him.

Behind the crown of tall trees, a shabby public bath house appears, the sign rusty and discoloured - SAUNA. SHOWERS. FOOD. OPEN 24 HOURS.

Seo Joon stares at the sign.

Sigh.

He walks inside.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A loud wind chime disrupts the haunting silence.

The place would look abandoned if not for the PALE MAN behind the counter, engaged in a racy magazine.

Face unshaven, eyes droopy and empty, the Pale Man doesn't spare SEO JOON a glance.

Seo Joon checks the price list behind the Pale Man, under a calendar showing the date: *OCTOBER 7TH, 1986*. His eyes linger over it for a second, betraying a glint of emotion.

He carefully counts several bills and places them on the counter, where the Pale Man trades them for a receipt.

With a sigh, the Pale Man drops his magazine, turns around and fishes out a key and some folded clothes, shoving them in Seo Joon's face with as little energy as he can spare.

Seo Joon takes the keys and the uniform - a pair of grey and blue shorts with a matching t-shirt - and bows slightly, flashing a small, polite smile.

The Pale Man ignores him and settles back on the counter, eyes shooting straight back to the magazine.

Seo Joon heads inside, guided by the signs above the door: *MALE CHANGING ROOMS* pointing to the left, *FEMALE CHANGING ROOMS* to the right.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, MALE CHANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

There's an array of mismatched and vandalised lockers, with a long bench that's close to falling apart and a single, dying neon buzzing loudly as it tries to stay on.

Someone is humming a song, dimming the bleakness of the place, if only slightly. It's one of 3 men.

First, an OLDER MAN - early 60s, apathetic - passively undressing.

Then a very TALL MAN - early 40s, ticked off but trying to keep it down - his moves a carbon copy of the Older Man's. He wraps his towel around his waist and looks over at-

- the singer, YUL - late 30s, handsome, but with an odd glint in his eyes. He's already shirtless, a necklace with a small key dangling from his neck and a puppy-like smile plastered on his face as he makes a show of taking his jeans off.

It doesn't amuse the Tall Man.

Finally, Yul turns to an observing, fully clothed SEO JOON and nods politely, prompting him to turn his attention back to his own locker.

Seo Joon shoves his duffel bag inside.

The older man slams his locker door shut and sneers past, heading to the showers in his birthday suit.

As Seo Joon busies himself with the complimentary slippers, the other two men leave as well.

The haunting buzzing of the neon is now the only thing in the room with Seo Joon.

He toes off his shoes and steps on the slippers, making sure not to touch the floor with his sock-clad feet. He puts the shoes in the locker with robotic movements, then moves on to his shirt.

His fingers freeze over the buttons before undressing quickly, clothes folded nicely and placed in the locker.

Seo Joon wraps a towel around his waist before taking off his underwear.

He drapes another towel over his shoulders, covering himself up as well as he can. He heads to the showers.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, SHOWERS - CONTINUOUS

The showers are more of a communal bathing area, with a big pool in the middle of the room and a handful of actual showers on one side.

Just like the rest of the bath house, the walls are covered in dark, moldy patches.

The showers are all rusted off, so SEO JOON walks right past. He decides on the far end of the pool, putting some distance between himself and the other three men.

Seo Joon scans the room quickly and hesitates before dropping his towels and dipping into the pool.

Slowly, the tension leaves him as he sinks deeper into the water. He closes his eyes and sighs, finally relaxing.

A moment.

He opens his eyes and glances over at Yul and the Tall Man, sitting at the edge of the pool.

Yul's smile is still firmly on, seemingly unbothered by the Tall Man scrubbing his back with too much force.

He makes an inaudible comment that garners a subtle change in the Tall Man's movement: his hands stop for just a second, eyes staring at the back of Yul's head in recognition.

The Tall Man resumes the intense scrubbing, an attempt to cover up his reaction.

Seo Joon looks away, flustered, and turns his attention back to his own body.

He aggressively scrubs his arms clean.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE - COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

SEO JOON, clothed in the uniform, dries his hair with a towel as he walks to the refrigerated food display. The thing probably hasn't been cleaned in years, and there's only two things left in it to choose from.

Nevertheless, he carefully scans both snacks, briefly glancing up when someone joins him: YUL.

Yul gives Seo Joon another polite smile before they both return their focus on the food.

Seo Joon targets the last packet of triangle kimbap, reaching to grab it-

- at the same time as Yul. Seo Joon withdraws his hand, dejected.

SEO JOON
You take it.

He turns to leave.

YUL
(puzzled)
Are you okay?

Seo Joon stops.

SEO JOON
It's just kimbap.

Yul can tell it's really not. He reaches for the back of Seo Joon's shirt, tugging it lightly and making Seo Joon turn around.

Yul lifts Seo Joon's hand and places the packet in it.

YUL
I'm not that hungry anyway.

His fingers linger slightly before grabbing the other snack from the shelf and walking away, handing it to the TALL MAN waiting in the doorway.

They both leave, Yul glancing back at Seo Joon briefly.

Seo Joon stays rooted to his spot, eyes glued to the kimbap, moved.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, SLEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

THE OLD MAN snores peacefully on a mat next to SEO JOON, who sits cross-legged on his own sleeping mat, toying with the kimbap packet.

He stares at it intensely, deep in thought.

He eventually pulls on the tape and opens the foil, closing his eyes in delight at the taste.

A tattered notebook rests in front of him, a list with a bunch of check marks scribbled on a page.

X BELONGINGS X WASH UP X DINNER LETTER

Seo Joon keeps munching as his hand looms over the page, eventually flipping it to a new one.

He begins writing: *Mother. Noona* (English: older sister, not necessarily related by blood).

He pauses, thinking.

Seo Joon flips over to a new page. He begins again: *To whoever finds me,*

Seo Joon sighs, dispirited. He scribbles something quickly and re-reads the letter.

Satisfied with the contents, Seo Joon rips the paper and stuffs it in his breast pocket.

He finishes his snack and picks up the towels around him, fashioning them into a makeshift noose.

Seo Joon tests out its strength and looks around him one more time. The Old Man sleeps like a log, and a quick glance at the door tells him no one else is coming.

He tiptoes out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

SEO JOON confidently but slowly starts advancing down the hallway, following the signs and arrows like a dead man walking.

He finds the door labelled "SAUNA" and reaches to push it, but stops in his tracks when he hears a scuffle.

He peeks inside.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, SAUNA - CONTINUOUS

The room is very dimly lit by slivers of moonlight coming through the small windows.

SEO JOON strains his eyes and sees TWO MEN fighting. Slowly, he manages to make out who they are: YUL and the TALL MAN. Yul is on the floor, getting kicked in the stomach repeatedly.

Yul coughs, sending droplets of blood on the Tall Man's feet. Seo Joon starts backing away, ready to get help, but stops when he hears more cries of pain.

Seo Joon jumps to action, wrapping his "rope" around the Tall Man's neck, pulling him off.

The Tall Man falls to his knees and starts choking, desperately thrashing and scratching at the towels and Seo Joon's hands.

The Tall Man almost escapes the hold, forcing Seo Joon's grip on the towel to tighten.

Seo Joon's eyes dart everywhere, panicking before locking with Yul's.

The Tall Man gives out a final, strained breath and lets go, arms falling limply to his sides. Seo Joon loosens his grip, the body slumping to the floor.

Everything stands still.

Tick tock

Tick tock

Tick tock

The wall clock sounds louder than it should in the eerie silence of the room.

Seo Joon stares, frozen in shock.

He looks at the "rope" discarded on the floor, at the body lying in front of him, at the exit, and finally at Yul, whose eyes haven't left Seo Joon.

He looks just as lost.

Seo Joon approaches the body slowly, sinking to his knees and gently trying to shake it awake.

SEO JOON

Ya. Get up.

The body remains unmoving. Seo Joon shakes more aggressively.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

Ya.

Yul snaps out of his shock and crouches on the other side. His hands, shaking, reluctantly pull on Seo Joon's.

YUL

(gently)

Stop.

SEO JOON

But- No, he just passed out.

Yul holds a finger under the Tall Man's nose for a moment.

YUL
He's not breathing.

Seo Joon moves away, hands finding the rope and fidgeting with it.

He shakes his head, a small, distressed chuckle escaping his lips. Every sound fades in on each other.

SEO JOON
Really...

He starts shaking. His fingers tap the floor frantically. They come to a stop as Yul moves closer, his hand grabbing Seo Joon's.

Seo Joon yanks it back.

YUL
(softly)
It's okay.

Yul reaches out again, this time for Seo Joon's shoulder.

The tension eases little by little, Seo Joon trying to control his breathing and calm himself down.

He keeps his stare firmly on the floor.

SEO JOON
Are you alright?

YUL
Me?

SEO JOON
There's blood.

Yul wipes at his mouth, a red tint staying on his lips.

YUL
I'm okay.

He gets up slowly, wincing as he clutches at his ribs.

Yul takes only a second to think before he lifts up the Tall Man's arms and strains to pull him towards the benches.

Seo Joon springs up.

SEO JOON
Ya, what are you-

YUL
We can't leave him like this.

A moment. Yul waits.

SEO JOON
He... he was going to kill you.
(beat)
Right?

A hopeful look.

YUL
Yes.

Seo Joon nods, hands reaching for the rope again.

SEO JOON
Then...
(beat)
Go.

YUL
Go?

SEO JOON
I'll fix it.
(beat)
Just... don't, um, move anything
anymore.

He fixes the knots in his towels, preparing the noose again.

Yul chuckles.

YUL
(amused)
What, is this a murder-suicide
thing?

Seo Joon doesn't laugh.

Yul's smile disappears.

YUL (CONT'D)
Don't. What-

SEO JOON
It's fine.
(beat)
It's... not a spontaneous idea.

YUL
Well scrap it.

Seo Joon loses his patience.

SEO JOON
I'm giving you a way out, take it
and get out!

A moment. The ticking of the clock presses on.

YUL
I don't want to.

Seo Joon gives him a pleading look, then glances at the body again, getting antsy.

He pulls Yul towards the door.

SEO JOON
Please. Just leave-

Yul pulls back.

YUL
You're not taking the blame for
helping me.
(beat)
And you're not using that.

He grabs hold of the noose.

SEO JOON
Let it go. Leave. Please.

At Seo Joon's frustrated look, Yul tries to come up with an alternative, looking around the room, lost.

The ticking is becoming agonising.

Seo Joon goes to push the door open, but Yul grabs his hand back, fingers brushing over it.

Yul stares at the floor.

YUL
Just... let me help you.

He looks up. They lock eyes.

YUL (CONT'D)
Please.

A stare-off.

Seo Joon sighs, defeated.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, SAUNA - NIGHT

Darkness.

A nervous SEO JOON stands on the sauna bench. His hands hold up the make-shift noose, stringing it up to a beam.

He closes his eyes.

Deep breaths.

He braces himself.

YUL looks up at him.

YUL
It's okay. I got you.

Beat.

A body falls abruptly, swinging from the ceiling.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

YUL drags his feet inside, clutching his ribs and looking exhausted. He ignores the light switch and heads directly to the small first aid box rusting on one of the locker-free walls.

He lets his forehead rest against the box briefly, closing his eyes and gathering his thoughts.

Beat.

Yul snaps to and opens the box, sighing at the contents. Or lack thereof.

He takes out all he can find: a roll of bandages, a nearly empty pack of cotton swabs and some rubbing alcohol.

He turns around and holds up his find.

YUL
Figures.

SEO JOON is sat on the bench, completely zoned out.

Yul sits next to him, dipping a swab in rubbing alcohol. He carefully reaches for a heavily scratched hand.

The touch jolts Seo Joon back to reality. He tries to pull away, but Yul holds on.

YUL (CONT'D)
It'll get infected.

SEO JOON
So?

A moment.

Yul tugs on the hand again, less resistance this time. He cleans the wound as best as he can, Seo Joon trying not to wince. The refusal to show pain amuses Yul.

YUL
It's okay to be vocal, you know.

SEO JOON
Uh huh.

Yul gently reaches for the other hand. Seo Joon indulges him.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
It's not that ba-

A harder dab finally gets a wince.

Seo Joon pushes Yul with annoyance but no real malice. Still, a pained groan escapes Yul.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
(worried)
Are you okay? I'm sorry-

YUL
I'm fine, I'm fine. Just remind me
to never piss you off.

SEO JOON
Too late.

A puppy smile takes over Yul's face.

Seo Joon aims for a glare, but his eyes betray a sense of longing.

He lets his eyes linger over his hands as Yul moves to wrap them up in clean bandages.

Kindness again.

Attention.

Warmth.

Care-

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
I can't do this, it's all wrong-

YUL
It's the only thing we can do.

Seo Joon scoffs.

SEO JOON
No, it's not.
(beat)
You should've left me alone.

YUL
Aren't you at least a teeny bit
glad I didn't though?

He finishes his nurse duties, holding Seo Joon's hands in his briefly. He caresses them with his thumbs before letting go.

A moment.

Seo Joon stares at him, then grabs Yul's face and brings him closer, tilting his head up.

YUL (CONT'D)
What-

Seo Joon dips a swab in rubbing alcohol and puts it over Yul's split lip.

Yul jolts back.

YUL (CONT'D)
Ow!!

SEO JOON
It'll get infected.

Despite the pain, Yul's amused.

He settles back down, Seo Joon honing in again, attention only on the wound. Yul pulls back little by little, taunting.

Seo Joon tries to glare again, but the close proximity makes him instantly look away.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
Stay still.

A few quick, gentle dabs and Yul's "patched up" as well.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
Right. That's everything then.

Seo Joon puts some distance between them and starts cleaning up, throwing away the used swabs and putting the supplies back.

It's clear he's getting fidgety, keeping his back turned.

Yul watches him curiously.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
If there's nothing else...

YUL
Are you hungry?

Seo Joon closes his eyes, trying not to snap in frustration.

CUT TO:

INT. INFINITY PUB - NIGHT

There's still a handful of blurry shapes roaming around as SEO JOON and YUL find a table.

A muffled song plays on the radio, the place otherwise quiet.

The room seems incredibly big, like the world will swallow the two up.

YUL
What are you doing? Sit down.

Seo Joon reluctantly does as told. He's the only one still wearing his bath house uniform under his jacket, Yul changed in his usual clothes.

YUL (CONT'D)
Should've grabbed your stuff before coming.

SEO JOON
They'll let me back in.

Yul throws him a frustrated look, then shifts his attention to the small vase on their table. He toys with the wilted flowers, gentle enough not to tear them away.

YUL
They changed shifts, the new guy
might not know.

SEO JOON
I'm still wearing their clothes,
aren't I?

A sigh.

An AUNTIE places various bowls of steaming hot food in front
of them.

AUNTIE
Enjoy your meal!

Yul flashes her a smile and offers his thanks. He drools over
his plate before looking up with expectant eyes.

Seo Joon makes no move to touch his food. His leg bounces
rapidly as he fidgets with his bandages, eyes glued to the
door.

YUL
You're being weird.

He shoves a spoonful of food in his mouth.

YUL (CONT'D)
(mouth full)
Calm down. Eat.

SEO JOON
You can't be serious.

YUL
You keep bouncing like that, the
auntie will notice.

SEO JOON
This is stupid.

He tries to leave, but Yul grabs him, wincing at the sudden
movement.

YUL
Stay. Unless you want me to tell
auntie what we just did.

SEO JOON
... really?

YUL

Well what do you want to do? Go back and pick up where you left off?

Seo Joon looks away, catching a glimpse of the bath house through the window.

Yul steals the piece of paper peeking out of his pocket.

SEO JOON

Ya-

Seo Joon tries to reach, but Yul grabs his wrist and holds it back.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

Give. It. Back.

Yul reads the paper: *TO WHOEVER FINDS ME, I AM KANG SEO JOON, REPORTER FOR ANYANG NEWS. I WISH TO BE CREMATED, MY ASHES SPREAD AT THE PEAK OF SURI MOUNTAIN. THANK YOU. I AM SORRY.*

An odd, heartbroken look creeps on Yul's face.

He loosens his grip.

Seo Joon sits down and yanks the paper back, looking away.

YUL

This is all you want to leave behind?

No answer.

YUL (CONT'D)

Is this how you see yourself? All you think there is of you?

No answer.

A moment.

YUL (CONT'D)

Why?

SEO JOON

(snappy)

Why what?

A moment.

Yul gathers his thoughts. He speaks softly.

YUL
Family?

Seo Joon keeps his gaze firmly on the table. He hesitates, biting his lip.

YUL (CONT'D)
Seo Joon.

Yul tries to reach out for him again, to touch him, but Seo Joon pulls back.

SEO JOON
It doesn't matter.

YUL
Yes it does.
(beat)
Tell me.

SEO JOON
They're not around, they don't care, it doesn't matter.

YUL
Friends?

SEO JOON
Seriously?

Beat.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
Don't really have those, okay?
Enough.

YUL
Passion?

Hesitation.

SEO JOON
Pointless. Are you done?

YUL
No. Love?

Beat.

SEO JOON
No. Whatever you ask, it's always no. There's nothing. I've got nothing.
(beat)
(MORE)

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

Is that enough? Do I have your
permission now?

Seo Joon attempts to leave again, but a dejected Yul grabs him again, gentler this time.

He doesn't pull Seo Joon down.

YUL

Just because you didn't have these
things before doesn't mean you'll
never have them.

(beat)

Or that you don't deserve them.

SEO JOON

Deserve? After this, I shouldn't
deserve anything.

YUL

Please.

Seo Joon looks down at Yul's hold. He can leave anytime he wants.

Beat.

His stomach suddenly growls. He sits back down quickly, trying to mask the sound.

Yul lets go, resuming his meal, amused. He takes a piece of meat from his own plate and places it in Seo Joon's rice bowl.

Seo Joon stares at it, then at him, and rejects his offering. He leaves his food untouched.

The usual leg bounce is replaced by a more subtle tap of his fingers on the table though.

SEO JOON

You're really not fazed by all
this?

A shrug.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

Have you... done this before?

Yul stops eating, looking down at his plate.

YUL

No. You're my first.

He looks at Seo Joon.

YUL (CONT'D)
I'm not good at helping people, but
I'm making an attempt.

SEO JOON
Not what I meant.

Yul rolls his eyes.

YUL
You helped me, I want to help you.
Simple as that.

Seo Joon scoffs.

SEO JOON
And threatening to tell people is
going to help me?

YUL
You're still here.

SEO JOON
I've been indulging you.

YUL
Why?

A moment.

He thinks, but he's got nothing.

Yul resumes eating, but slows his pace.

Seo Joon fiddles with his hands, looking at Yul's neat work.

The stillness of their little bubble is becoming too much.

SEO JOON
When you gave up the kimbap...
that's the first time someone's
ever put me first. Something as
insignificant as triangle kimbap
from a stranger. Almost made me
cry. It's pathetic.
(beat)
And it's not just people. There's
nothing left. No home to go back
to, no job to do, nothing. And now
this...

YUL
Who are you trying to convince?

Seo Joon has no answer.

He reluctantly eats the offering in his bowl. As Seo Joon settles, their surroundings finally register with him.

The cracked, moldy walls, the cheap, scratched tables, the melancholic song on the radio.

Yul starts softly humming along, strangely soothing Seo Joon. He allows himself to relax, even if for a moment.

SEO JOON
I should head back...

He makes no move to leave.

YUL
Can you stay a just little longer?

Seo Joon chews on his lip.

A moment.

SEO JOON
Just until we finish.

YUL
Okay.

Beat.

They both get back to their meals, paces agonisingly slow.

Their eyes meet. Thoughts exchange with no words spoken.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, SLEEPING ROOM - MORNING

SEO JOON opens his eyes slowly and stares at the ceiling.

He brushes his fingers over his throat, then down to his stomach. He rubs it absentmindedly, then brings his hands in front of his face, looking over his bandages.

Seo Joon sits up.

His fingers reach into his breast pocket, shyly, taking out his note.

He unfolds it carefully and stares at what was hidden inside: a wilted flower - a memento of the other night.

A heavy sigh.

Seo Joon places the note and flower on his mat, shrugs the blanket off, and steps out.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

SEO JOON tiptoes around the building, following the noise coming from the sauna with increasing worry.

He runs into A SWARM OF POLICE, the panic making their faces morph into each other.

Seo Joon hides his hands in his pockets.

Standing guard at the entrance is OFFICER KIM SOMIN - twenty seven, vivacious but serious. She keeps sneaking curious glances inside the room.

Somin spots Seo Joon, a flicker of joy on her face.

SOMIN

(warm)

Hyung (*English: older brother, not necessarily related by blood*)! Long time no see!

He gives her a shy smile. Somin's face turns serious, if only slightly.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

You know I can't let you in.

SEO JOON

I know.

His look registers with her: bath house uniform, bed hair, puffy eyes.

SOMIN

Hyung, did you sleep here?

SEO JOON

I thought I'd do something special.

Her eyes narrow, but she nods, looking around before hugging him.

He keeps his hands in his pockets.

SOMIN
I'm sorry I missed yesterday. But
it sounds like you had fun.

SEO JOON
Yeah-

Seo Joon looks over her shoulder and catches a glimpse of someone familiar: YUL, face partially hidden behind a forensic mask, busy photographing the scene.

Yul looks over for just a second, a glint of acknowledgement and a smile betrayed by his eyes.

Seo Joon withdraws from the hug, attention still on Yul. He tries to mask his surprise.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
That person... who is he?

SOMIN
Oh, no ID yet, but-

She turns around, finally having an excuse to look inside.

SEO JOON
No, the photographer.

SOMIN
The- what?

Somin turns back to Seo Joon, confused.

SEO JOON
Do you know anything about him?

SOMIN
Not much, he just got transferred a
few days ago... why do you want to
know?

SEO JOON
Just curious.

Her brows furrow.

SOMIN
His name's Choi Yul. He seems real
serious about his job. You can
always tell when the pictures are
taken by him.

SEO JOON

How so?

SOMIN

They're... different. Or I don't know... pretty? Morbid, but fancy. At least the ones that I've seen.

(beat)

Anyway, I don't see him very often, but then again, no one does. He doesn't really talk to anyone.

SEO JOON

Hmm, I see.

(beat)

I better head back.

Seo Joon gives Somin a small smile and bows his head.

SOMIN

Hyung, wait-

KIBUM (O.S.)

Miss Kim?!

Both Somin and Seo Joon freeze as DETECTIVE LEE KIBUM pokes his head out of the sauna room, looking left and right. He's mid 40s, bad fashion, exhaustion hidden behind an overly cheery smile.

He perks up when he finds her.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

There you are! And who is this?

He walks towards Seo Joon, who bows in greeting.

SEO JOON

Hello, I'm Kang Seo Joon, I work for- I'm Officer Kim's acquaintance.

SOMIN

Friend.

Kibum extends a hand. Seo Joon hesitates before shaking it. The bandage doesn't escape Kibum or Somin.

KIBUM

Lee Kibum. Homicide captain.

SEO JOON

I know.

KIBUM

Oh?

SOMIN

He's a reporter for Anyang News. He always tries to creep in on crime scenes but I keep him away.

Kibum puts a hand over Somin's shoulder.

KIBUM

Our Miss Kim, never mixing work with pleasure. Is that what you're doing here, Reporter Kang? Although...

Kibum looks Seo Joon over, then points to the crime scene.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

Was it the sauna?

Seo Joon gives Kibum a questioning look.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

Your hand. Did you burn it in there?

SEO JOON

Ah, yes. Hurts more than you'd think.

KIBUM

What time did you come in?

SEO JOON

I don't really remember. Must have been around 10?

(beat)

Can I ask what happened?

KIBUM

Dead guy. Did you happen to see anything?

SEO JOON

No, I only stayed in there for a little bit, washed up and went to sleep.

He looks at Kibum - brows raised in fake-acknowledgement, and Somin - mulling it over.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
I did go for a late-night meal
before bed though. The auntie could
confirm if you need her to.

SOMIN
You're not a suspect, hyung.

KIBUM
Alone?

Somin frowns. Seo Joon looks away briefly.

SEO JOON
No.

SOMIN
(in disbelief)
Who were you with?

SEO JOON
I don't know him. We just shared a
table.

KIBUM
Name?

SEO JOON
He never mentioned it. How did the
person die?

KIBUM
Hanging. We don't know much, but
it's clearly a suicide.

SEO JOON
(reluctant)
On the record?

KIBUM
Sure. The person you were with, can
you describe-

Yul walks out of the sauna, camera in hand.

YUL
Chief, we're packing up. They need
you to sign off on the evidence.

KIBUM
Of course.
(to Seo Joon)
(MORE)

KIBUM (CONT'D)

I look forward to reading your article on this then. See you around.

He reluctantly returns to the sauna with Yul, who briefly locks eyes with Seo Joon.

SOMIN

You're acting weird.

SEO JOON

I'm... tired, that's all.

SOMIN

Late night with your new friend?

A beat.

SEO JOON

Anyway... how's the promotion coming along?

SOMIN

Slow. Not surprising, but it's really-

She makes a frustrated sound.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

We should go out, like before. Soju, stories...

SEO JOON

Beef... on you...

SOMIN

Could do, could do.

They both chuckle.

SEO JOON

It has been a while...

They let the feeling hang for a second, reminiscing.

SOMIN

I'll let you get back, just-

She digs through her jacket's inside pocket and pulls out a rectangle-shaped gift. She hands it to Seo Joon.

SOMIN (CONT'D)
 Happy birthday. I was planning on dropping in later, but seeing as you're here...

SEO JOON
 Ah...

He starts carefully picking at the tape, Somin noticing his other hand's bandaged as well.

SOMIN
 Again, I'm so so sorry I missed it yesterday, I was swamped. But I didn't forget!

SEO JOON
 No... you didn't.

Seo Joon finally gets through the wrapping and unveils a brand new notebook, a starry sky pattern on the cover with a pen attached to the back.

SOMIN
 I may not show it, but you're still a star writer to me. Get rid of that old one, it's in shreds.

He manages a smile.

SEO JOON
 Thank you. Really.

SOMIN
 Sounds like you had a good one without me anyway, hm? Who would've thought? You're really getting out of your shell.

SEO JOON
 It was... interesting.

He gestures to the notebook again as he starts walking away.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
 Thanks again. And... don't lose hope, okay?

SOMIN
 Yeah yeah.

She returns to her position guarding the door, watching Seo Joon, puzzled.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, SAUNA - CONTINUOUS

As other forensics pack up to leave, YUL zips his camera bag and tries to follow, struggling not to show any pain.

KIBUM
Are you okay?

Yul turns to a curious Kibum.

YUL
Slept in the wrong position I
guess.

KIBUM
There's a nice lady in the red
light district who could take a
look at it.

YUL
That's good to know, but I'd rather
power through it.

KIBUM
You used to be more fun.

Kibum dismisses Yul, turning his attention to where the body used to hang, pensive.

It makes Yul linger.

YUL
Chief?

KIBUM
Hm?

Yul nods at the beam, questioning.

Kibum flashes him a smile.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
It's nothing, I'm overthinking. No
one wants to drag this on because
of cooky theories anyway.

YUL
Theories like?

KIBUM
Are we bonding? Is this bonding?

Yul chuckles.

YUL
I'm just curious.

A moment.

KIBUM
There's no note, for starters.
Makes one wonder if this is really
what it looks like.

YUL
Not everyone leaves notes.

KIBUM
Hm, perhaps.

YUL
Chief.

KIBUM
Hm?

YUL
Is it because of...
(beat)
Sometimes things are just what they
seem.

KIBUM
I know. I'm just being thorough.

YUL
I'm just saying. You don't want to
go from one extreme to the other.
This seems clear cut to me.

A reluctant nod.

KIBUM
You're right, I'm just projecting.

A moment.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. If being here isn't what
you wanted.

YUL
It's fine, I work better in
homicide.

KIBUM
Well, I'm glad to have you back.
You better not leave me for arson
again.

Yul smiles, eyes drifting to the floor.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
And drop the "chief", it sounds
weird coming from you.

YUL
Right... hyung.

KIBUM
That's what I'm talking about!
We're back!

Kibum drapes an arm over Yul's shoulder and leads the way
out. With one last scan of the room, they exit.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE, SLEEPING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SEO JOON plops down on his mat in disbelief. He stares into
space, a relieved chuckle creeping its way out.

He looks at his gift, then the note he left on the mat. He
carefully takes the flower and places it between the pages of
his new notebook.

He crumples the note.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG NEWS - DAY

SEO JOON dawdles inside the office, the sound of every
typewriter stopping abruptly as heads look up at him,
confused.

A single desk is empty and cleared, only a typewriter resting
on it.

Seo Joon bows in greeting, nervous.

He clears his throat and walks to the editor's office, the typewriters resuming reluctantly.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG NEWS, EDITOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

EDITOR KIM - early 60s, on the chubby side - is sat at his desk, a pile of articles used as a stand for his bowl of noodles.

He slurps on his food, black bean sauce all over his face.

A knock.

EDITOR KIM

What?

SEO JOON enters.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)

You better have those articles,
this paper won't write its-

He finally looks up.

SEO JOON

Hello.

Seo Joon bows low, a sign of respect.

Editor Kim looks at him only for a second before returning his attention on the noodles, speaking with his mouth full.

EDITOR KIM

Did you forget something? We
could've had someone send it to
you.

SEO JOON

Actually...

Editor Kim stops eating.

EDITOR KIM

Seo Joon...

Seo Joon holds several handwritten pieces of paper in front of him.

SEO JOON

Please, it will only take a minute.

EDITOR KIM

Kid...

SEO JOON

Please, sir.

EDITOR KIM

Just go.

Seo Joon remains rooted to his spot despite Editor Kim getting back to his food.

Editor Kim glares at him to leave, but he doesn't move.

Editor Kim eventually finishes his noodles, staring sadly at the empty, sauce covered bowl.

The absence of food pains him enough that he gestures for Seo Joon to give him the papers.

He puts his glasses on and starts reading, unenthusiastic.

After a moment he stops, giving Seo Joon a perplexed look before returning to the article.

The silence is harrowing, Seo Joon bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Editor Kim hands him the article back.

SEO JOON

Sir-

EDITOR KIM

Go and type it out properly.

SEO JOON

Sorry?

A smile cracks on Editor Kim's face.

EDITOR KIM

It's good! How you described the place, the "decaying walls" and "eerie stillness" parts, it really painted the picture nicely, I could actually see it all in my mind.

Editor Kim gets up and grabs Seo Joon's arms in a proud hold.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)

And the hanging body....

Seo Joon looks up at him.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)
It's like you were actually there
when he did it! How?

SEO JOON
I got to see the scene up close.

EDITOR KIM
And Chief Lee?

SEO JOON
I spoke to him personally.

A proud slap on the back.

EDITOR KIM
See, you punk? You finally got it.

Seo Joon looks down, proud as well. Editor Kim looks him
over.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)
Seo Joon. You want to come back,
right? This is where you want to
be?

SEO JOON
Yes, sir. Very much.

Editor Kim throws a glance at his empty bowl.

EDITOR KIM
Then you need to bring me another
story.

SEO JOON
Sir?

EDITOR KIM
I need to know this isn't a one
time thing. I need to be able to
rely on you, hm?

Seo Joon takes the compliment, bashful.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)
Now go and type this out.

SEO JOON
Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

Seo Joon turns around, gears turning in his head.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG POLICE STATION, DARK ROOM - DAY

The room is bathed in red and quite messy, strings of rope hanging above YUL's head. Several pictures from the hanging crime scene are clipped neatly to it.

Yul dances through the tiny room as if he's done it countless times before, looking bored.

He rummages through a desk, finding a paperclip and putting it between his lips.

Taking several pictures off the rope, he checks them before arranging them in a pile. He holds them together with the clip and attaches them to the police file on his desk.

Yul takes a moment to read the file, pausing as if reminiscing. A small smile creeps in.

Yul moves to a different desk, with a spring in his step as he checks his watch. The desk has a telephone in the far corner, and four small trays aligned next to each other, labels almost washed out: *developer, stop bath, fixer, wash.*

He grasps a newly developed photograph from the wash with a pair of tongs and pulls it out.

Yul holds the photo above its tray, draining it. It's the same crime scene, but the way it's taken makes the picture look more intimate. He hangs it on the string.

Fishing out the key under his shirt, he unlocks a drawer and takes out a photo album.

Yul sifts through it, taking his time to look at each photograph.

The first one looks decades old. It's of a petite woman, hanged with a pair of stockings.

He swallows, nervous, and almost takes the picture out before moving on to the next one.

A boy, not older than sixteen, face up on the ground with blood pooling out of his shirt. There are glass shards all around him. Yul's fingers graze over the photo, sad eyes looking almost nostalgic.

Then a man, dress shirt bloodied, a broken bottle resting next to him. Yul sighs, closing his eyes for a moment.

He turns to a blank page, staring at it, fingers running over it.

Yul shakes his head in disbelief as his eyes lock to the pictures on the string.

He laughs.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANYANG, STREET - NIGHT

A pair of trainers splash into puddles, careless, as A MAN makes his way through town.

A similar pair of trainers - consciously avoiding the same puddles - trail behind the Man, keeping a safe distance.

The lights and noise slowly die down as they make their way to a more secluded part of town.

The sound of footsteps is hard to conceal, despite the PURSUER's efforts.

The Man's steps halt.

YUL smiles to himself, feeling a shift in their game of cat and mouse.

And they're walking again, slightly faster.

A turn, to lose - or to lure.

The Pursuer quickens their pace to catch up, closing in.

He turns -

- and walks straight into a taunting Yul.

YUL

(amused)

Seo Joon. What are you doing?

The pursuer, SEO JOON, awkwardly glues his eyes to the ground.

SEO JOON

I... didn't know how to reach you.

Excitement across Yul's face.

YUL

For?

Seo Joon looks up.

SEO JOON
Are you hungry?

CUT TO:

EXT. TENT BAR - NIGHT

The tent is bustling with loud conversations and laughs coming from every tiny plastic table.

SEO JOON and YUL are sat to the side, opposite each other. Most food is polished off, only a few small side dish plates still left. Bottles of soju litter the table.

Yul looks proudly at the empty plates, then at an anxious Seo Joon. Seo Joon does his best to avoid eye contact.

SEO JOON
How are your ribs?

YUL
Better, they only hurt when I breathe.

Seo Joon looks up, worried. Yul basks in his concern.

YUL (CONT'D)
I'm fine, I'm fine.
(beat)
It's nice to see you eat without being forced.

SEO JOON
(defensive)
I do enjoy food, just not... you know.

YUL
When you just hanged some guy?

Seo Joon kicks him under the table.

YUL (CONT'D)
Sorry.
(beat)
I'm glad we did it though. The dinner I mean. You seem better.

SEO JOON
I suppose.

He catches Yul's gaze.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

(solemn)

Thank you.

They keep their gaze locked for a moment, Yul acknowledging his words.

Seo Joon's hand rests on the table, bandage gone and fingers spread. Yul reaches out.

YUL

Your hands better?

Seo Joon makes a fist, withdrawing his fingers before he starts playing with them. He doesn't move his hand away though.

There are only faint traces left of his wounds.

SEO JOON

They were just scratches, you're making me sound like a loser.

YUL

They were deep scratches.

SEO JOON

It's been almost a week, I'm fine.

Seo Joon straightens up.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

Anyway, this isn't a courtesy call.

Yul tenses up.

YUL

So you didn't chase me through dark alleys just because you enjoy my company.

A glare.

Yul signals for another bottle.

SEO JOON

I... have a request.

YUL

Okay...

A hand breezes past, placing a fresh bottle on their table.

YUL (CONT'D)
I read your article. Great stuff.

Seo Joon looks down, smiling shyly.

SEO JOON
Thank you.

YUL
You painted death in a really...
interesting light.
(beat)
I hoped our night would spark an
idea in you.

SEO JOON
It did...

Seo Joon pours Yul a drink.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
But I need more.

YUL
More what? Inspiration?
(hushed)
Death?

SEO JOON
No!
(beat)
I just figured you could... share
what you know sometimes. If you're
willing.

YUL
And if I'm not?

Seo Joon hesitates, eyes fixated on the bottle's label.

SEO JOON
You may not have done it, but you
did help set it up after.

YUL
So you're blackmailing me.

SEO JOON
I'm just putting it out there. That
we both have dirt on each other.

Yul nods, chuckling. He downs his drink and starts playing
with a napkin, folding it like an origami.

Neither looks at the other.

YUL
What I'm really getting from this
is you're scared I'll run my mouth
about that night.

SEO JOON
I don't know anything about you, so
yeah. That's a worry.

Yul stops for a second, glancing up at Seo Joon before
resuming.

YUL
You don't have to worry.

Seo Joon pushes the bottle away and looks up.

SEO JOON
Really? Cause you blindsided me
already. A forensic photographer,
working our case of all cases.

A shrug.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
Yeah, my point exactly.

YUL
Look, it's like you said. We're
both involved. We both have dirt on
each other. One goes down, the
other follows, end of story.
(beat)
Unless...

SEO JOON
Unless?

YUL
(reluctant)
There could be more.

Seo Joon furrows his brows.

Yul finishes his creation: a flower, nothing fancy, but still
pretty. He pushes it towards Seo Joon.

SEO JOON
Have you done this before?

Yul mulls it over, uncharacteristically nervous.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

Tell me.

Yul moves closer, fingers tapping the table.

YUL

It's not outside the realm of possibility.

Seo Joon looks at him, swallowing hard. His eyes drift to Yul's hands, tapping away. His own hand drifts to his throat, rubbing at it.

YUL (CONT'D)

Does that scare you?

A moment.

SEO JOON

No.

YUL

Why not?

Beat.

He thinks. And thinks. Eventually -

SEO JOON

I... don't know.

Seo Joon takes the flower, toying with it.

YUL

Can I trust you?

SEO JOON

Only if it goes both ways.

YUL

Right. Well, I don't really know you either.

SEO JOON

You know enough.

YUL

You got to ask around about me though.

A flicker of panic. Yul picks up a lettuce leaf and starts making a wrap, adding meat, rice, and samjang paste.

SEO JOON

What?

YUL

Officer Kim. She was very eager to know how we know each other.

SEO JOON

And you told her that...

YUL

We met on a crime scene, of course.

Seo Joon sighs.

Yul finishes his wrap and holds it to Seo Joon.

SEO JOON

You need to stop giving me food.

Seo Joon tries to take it, but Yul pulls it back.

YUL

Should I make airplane noises?

Seo Joon frowns, confused, before it clicks. He tries to laugh it off.

SEO JOON

Ah, come on, what-

YUL

I'll hold this to your face until you eat it.

The amusement stops abruptly.

Seo Joon looks around, but they're hidden in their own little bubble. Yul's intense gaze leaves no room for backing out.

Seo Joon takes a deep breath before closing in on the wrap, careful but quick.

Yul pushes the plates of ingredients towards Seo Joon, inviting him to make one as well.

YUL (CONT'D)

You're willing to go pretty far for a story. Why is Anyang News so important to you?

SEO JOON

I don't know... It's what I've worked my whole life to achieve. I invested all I had in that place.

He sighs, then looks up at Yul.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

I have a second chance at keeping it. I don't want to waste it.

YUL

And you're sure my help is what you need?

Seo Joon starts making the wrap.

SEO JOON

I don't know what it is, but... you've read the article. I've never written like that before.

Yul leans his face closer. He speaks softly.

YUL

That night. How do you feel about it?

He searches Seo Joon's eyes, clearly hoping for a certain answer.

Seo Joon gulps, nervous. He looks around, making sure no one's eavesdropping. He leans in slightly.

SEO JOON

I'm still... I don't know. It's so clear, but I'm still so confused. It doesn't feel real.

A moment. Again, Seo Joon braves looking at Yul, who watches him with an odd, fascinated look.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

But...

(beat)

I helped you. And I don't regret that.

Yul smiles as Seo Joon finishes.

Seo Joon tries to hand the wrap over, but Yul leans in and wraps his lips around Seo Joon's fingers.

Seo Joon's breath hitches and he freezes, hand stuck in the air. He makes a fist and withdraws quickly.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
Don't do that.

YUL
(cheeky)
Are you shy?

A glare.

SEO JOON
Anyway. I've hogged this conversation enough. Tell me about your pictures. How exactly can crime scene photography turn into art?

Yul straightens up, surprised.

YUL
Ah, no one's asked about this before.

He gets a boyish glee in his eyes as he thinks.

YUL (CONT'D)
You know about still life, right?

Seo Joon nods.

YUL (CONT'D)
It's also called "dead nature". So it's not like I'm doing anything new, this has been around for centuries.

He looks away, drifting off into his mind. Seo Joon watches him with fascination.

YUL (CONT'D)
Beauty can be found anywhere, even in ugliness and death.
(beat)
To me, death doesn't mean the end of things. It shouldn't. Everything decays and rots and withers away at some point, but through my pictures, my subjects get to live forever. They become eternal, immortalised in a photo.

He looks at Seo Joon with a tinge of yearning.

YUL (CONT'D)
And now in your stories too.

A moment.

SEO JOON
I never thought about it that
way...

Yul leans back in his chair.

YUL
Maybe you should stop seeing it as
work and let your mind run free.
Open your heart to it.

Seo Joon nods.

Silence befalls their table for a moment, broken by Yul's
humming, his fingers tapping.

SEO JOON
What is that? It sounds familiar.

Yul smiles.

YUL
"With You Forever".

Seo Joon still looks confused.

YUL (CONT'D)
It was on the radio. That night.

SEO JOON
Ah-

YUL
(singing softly)
"Over the red ocean where the sun
sets, I'll go with you. Even if
this world changes, my love will be
with you forever."

Seo Joon takes it in. His own face smiles fondly.

SEO JOON
You have a nice voice.

Yul shrugs, but basks in the attention. He checks his watch.

A moment.

YUL
 If we do this, if we... become
 partners...
 (beat)
 There's something we have to take
 care of first.

He gets up and answers Seo Joon's questioning look with a nod to the exit.

YUL (CONT'D)
 Come with me.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANYANG, MARKET - CONTINUOUS

The market is much like it was when SEO JOON first passed through: busy, damp, and full of life.

This time though, he has YUL. A Yul who keeps clutching his ribs or masking wincing of pain, so Seo Joon slows his pace.

Seo Joon takes a moment just to take Yul in.

His delicate, but strong features, his eyes, dancing across the market stalls. He looks down at Yul's hand, the hand that offered him kindness and comfort and care.

His own almost twitches to grab it.

A hand holding two free samples of mini honey pancakes extends in front of YUL, who takes them with glee. He flashes a charming smile and nods in thanks, passing a stick to Seo Joon and eating his own.

SEO JOON
 Thank you. Are you okay? And where
 are we going?

YUL
 Boy, you sure are a reporter.

Seo Joon rolls his eyes.

YUL (CONT'D)
 We're going to find your
 inspiration.

SEO JOON
 Right...

Seo Joon stares at his pancake.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
 Hey, um... who was... you know. Who
 was he? To you.

Hesitation.

YUL
 Someone I knew a while back.

Seo Joon scowls. Come on.

YUL (CONT'D)
 We grew up together, but we weren't
 very close. He was a friend of a
 friend back at the group home.

SEO JOON
 Group home?

He eats his pancake.

YUL
 Haneul Center. My father died in
 the war. My mother passed away when
 I was 15. I stayed there for three
 years before enrolling.

SEO JOON
 I'm sorry.

They round the corner, exiting the market. Seo Joon looks
 both ways before crossing the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANYANG, STREET - CONTINUOUS

SEO JOON and YUL keep walking, practically huddled up.

SEO JOON
 So why were you fighting then?

Seo Joon hesitates when he sees the familiar neons of the red
 light district. To be here with Yul feels different.

Yul doesn't seem bothered in the slightest.

YUL
 He dredged up some unpleasant
 memories from back then.
 (beat)
 I didn't think anyone even knew
 what happened, but he did.
 (MORE)

YUL (CONT'D)

And he carried that memory with him
for decades.

He abruptly stops and scans the street, much to Seo Joon's
discomfort. He spots his target.

SEO JOON

And what memory is that?

Yul turns to him, moving into his space. The proximity sucks
the air out of Seo Joon.

YUL

(with remorse)

What I did to our friend.

Yul's hand reaches out -

- and goes for the pancake stick, taking Seo Joon's and
throwing both in the bin he just spotted.

At the new distance, Seo Joon can breathe again.

Yul moves on, up the hill, with Seo Joon reluctantly in tow.

They walk in silence, both aware the other keeps glancing
over. If not for the tension, it would even look comical.

As the bath house comes into view, Seo Joon grabs hold of the
back of Yul's jacket and pulls him to a halt.

SEO JOON

Why are we back here?

A moment.

Yul turns slowly, eyes glued to the ground.

YUL

If you want to continue... this, we
need to take some precautions.

Yul tugs on his sleeve and pulls him under the cover of
darkness.

Close contact.

Discomfort.

Again.

Yul lifts a finger to his lips and they wait, Seo Joon's
other hand still attached the sleeve. They're so close their
noses are almost touching.

A shape passes them by. Yul reluctantly releases Seo Joon and nods towards it.

They follow.

They begin walking back the way they came as the shape becomes familiar - the PALE MAN, as lifeless and sleepy as before.

Seo Joon throws Yul a questioning look, but Yul keeps going, eyes never leaving the Pale Man.

As they make their way back into the bustle of the town, the Pale Man arrives at his destination: *Elyxion Noraebang* (English: karaoke room).

He walks inside.

SEO JOON
What are we doing?

YUL
Getting you a story.

SEO JOON
How?

Yul's expression says everything: "You should know."

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
No. NO.

YUL
He could be a witness.

SEO JOON
To what? He didn't look at me when I came in, and he wasn't even there when we left.

YUL
But he saw me. And him. When we checked in.

A moment.

SEO JOON
He didn't do anything.

YUL
Everyone does something.

Seo Joon swallows down.

YUL (CONT'D)

We have to. For our own safety.

Seo Joon chews on his lip.

A moment.

Seo Joon sighs, resigned.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG NEWS - DAY

SEO JOON is sat at his work desk typing carefully, lost in his own world. It's already past noon.

Peeking out of the typewriter are bits of the article: *-AIR HEAVY WITH THE STENCH OF SMOKE, SOJU, AND THE DISTINCT METALLIC SWEETNESS OF BLOOD.*

He stops typing, fingers lingering over the keys, index wrapped in a bandage. He stares at the page and swallows down, head falling in his hands as he struggles to keep going.

A hand finds its way over his desk, placing a takeaway food bowl and a pair of chopsticks in front of him. Tucked under the bowl is an envelope.

SEO JOON

What-

He looks up, but the delivery man is already gone.

Seo Joon stares at the food he never ordered, spotting the envelope. He opens it carefully.

He freezes when he takes out several developed pictures. He takes them in, fascinated, before flipping them over, revealing a handwritten message: *For your eyes only. A reminder that our stories will live forever.*

An odd look creeps on Seo Joon's face, his hands shaking with anticipation.

He flips the pictures back around, staring at the top one: the hanging victim, taken as if the photographer was perching over his shoulder, his neck stained with dark bruises spreading across it. The towel-noose strains against his weight.

Seo Joon brushes his fingers over his own throat, putting the picture down.

The next photo is from a different point of view, the victim shot in the center of the picture, almost towering over the photographer, the shadows behind the white body making it look like a floating, wingless angel.

He takes a moment, looking around to see if anyone can see his shaken state. He stares at the two pictures, touching them like they're priceless.

Seo Joon puts them down and looks at the final picture: the karaoke room. He licks his lips.

He places the photo at the bottom of his typewriter, fingers looming over the keys before he wills himself to start typing.

CUT TO:

INT. ELYXION NORAEBANG, ROOM #9 - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

YUL enters the room slowly, taking in the state before gesturing for SEO JOON to join him.

THE PALE MAN is sprawled on the sofa, passed out.

SEO JOON (V.O.)

"The man was found in a position all too familiar to him: reigning over the table covered in white powder, splashes of alcohol, and smashed glass."

Seo Joon and Yul approach the Pale Man, stepping over broken glass. Yul checks his breathing, nodding that he's still alive.

SEO JOON (V.O.)

"His body is enveloped in the lights reflecting from the disco ball, perhaps as a comfort to his pale, lifeless body."

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG NEWS - DAY

SEO JOON reveals the next picture. He stares at it, gulping.

CUT TO:

INT. ELYXION NORAEBANG, ROOM #9 - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

YUL picks up a shard of glass, sleeve pulled over his hand, and passes it into SEO JOON's left hand. He closes Seo Joon's hand with his, holding it for a moment.

They share an intense look. Yul picks up another shard for himself.

Seo Joon frowns as Yul rolls up THE PALE MAN's sleeves and presses the shard to his wrist.

SEO JOON (V.O.)
"At first glance, he'd appear in a peaceful slumber if not for the bloody stains pooling at his wrists."

Seo Joon grabs Yul's wrist, trying to plead one last time. At Yul's goading, he reluctantly lets go.

SEO JOON (V.O.)
"The wounds look deeper on one side, a sign of hesitation as he used a shard of glass to carve into his own flesh."

Yul presses the shards into the Pale Man's left wrist.

Seo Joon watches, fascinated, as the blood trickles down.

He hesitates before cutting the right wrist with his left hand, although not as deep.

SEO JOON (V.O.)
"The glass sits at his feet, a reminder of the pressure he felt after witnessing such tragic death only a few days before."

Seo Joon nicks his finger and drops the shard.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG NEWS, EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

EDITOR KIM is enjoying lunch, this time a steaming cup of ramen.

A knock before SEO JOON enters, article in hand.

EDITOR KIM

Ah, Seo Joon, come in! What a sight
for sore eyes! What do you have for
me, kid?

Editor Kim wipes his mouth and eagerly accepts the papers,
scanning his desk for his glasses. Once on, he sets out to
read.

Seo Joon picks at his bandage, relaxed.

Editor Kim finishes and puts down the article away from any
source of food.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)

Where did you get this?

SEO JOON

Sir?

EDITOR KIM

Your source. You didn't cite
anyone.

SEO JOON

I'd prefer not to say, sir.

EDITOR KIM

Seo Joon.

SEO JOON

I can't break the trust put in me.

EDITOR KIM

I know that, but-

SEO JOON

If I do there would be no more
stories.

Beat.

EDITOR KIM

You should thank this guy for
giving you a sequel. Who would've
thought there'd be a part two, eh?

SEO JOON

Right.

EDITOR KIM

You seem to have a knack for
covering suicides.

SEO JOON
I suppose so.

EDITOR KIM
Our very own suicide reporter!

Editor Kim looks at Seo Joon fondly. Like a father, proud of his son.

He throws his ramen cup in the trash and gets up, locking Seo Joon in an uncomfortable, but warm hug.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)
Welcome back, Reporter Kang.

A wide smile breaks on Seo Joon's face.

SEO JOON
Thank you, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG POLICE STATION, HOMICIDE SQUAD ROOM - NIGHT

The squad room looks pretty tranquil, the handful of heads either eating or chatting instead of doing any police work.

KIBUM is sat at his desk, legs resting on it as he reads the bath house case file.

He undoes his tie and wraps it around his neck, pulling it upwards and simulating hanging himself. He pulls from different angles, but doesn't look satisfied with his results.

SOMIN is sat at her own desk, preparing a file of crime scene photographs from the noraebang, a blood test report, and other documents.

She looks over the report.

SOMIN
Chief?

Kibum jolts, feet falling off the desk. He straightens up as Somin walks up to his desk.

SOMIN (CONT'D)
Chief.

He blinks up at Somin, dropping his tie.

KIBUM
Yes. What is it, Miss Kim?

SOMIN
I have the blood test report back
on the noraebang suicide.

He unenthusiastically accepts the file. She stays rooted to her spot as he reads.

KIBUM
Yeeees?

SOMIN
Don't you find it strange?

KIBUM
That an almost abandoned bath house
seems to be driving people to kill
themselves? I am actually
considering calling an exorcist.

She smiles. Briefly.

SOMIN
You know what I mean.

KIBUM
The two blood types.

She nods excitedly.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
Theories?

SOMIN
Say it belongs to one of the
workers. Why would anyone get cut
on the exact same shard he uses to
kill himself? There was a whole
pile of them, it's next to
impossible.

(beat)
I think it was the murder weapon.

Kibum nods, deep in thought.

KIBUM
Is this because of our closure
rate?

SOMIN
Excuse me?

He looks up at her, challenging.

KIBUM

Are you seeing more into this than usual because you want a big bust? To help with that hefty promotion you've been after since you got here?

She scoffs.

SOMIN

If I, a police officer, show an actual interest in investigating, then I'm only really looking out for myself?

KIBUM

Well are you?

SOMIN

No.

KIBUM

Great! That's all I needed.

A confused Somin can do nothing but stare.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

Good catch on the blood, it is strange.

She brightens up as Kibum gets up.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

I think I also need coffee though, if you'd be so kind.

Somin deflates.

SOMIN

Right, I'll get-

KIBUM

Let's go.

SOMIN

Sorry?

He grabs his jacket and nods to Somin's.

KIBUM

My treat. I'd just like your company.

Somin smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. SHINY CAFE - NIGHT

KIBUM and SOMIN sit at a small table with their coffee, Somin also wolfing down on a piece of chocolate cake. Kibum watches her, amused.

SOMIN

Have some. I see you eyeing it.

He keeps his gaze on her.

KIBUM

I wasn't. And I would've, but it's not cheesecake.

SOMIN

Ew.

(beat)

Thanks for this, chief.

KIBUM

It's the least I could do. You take care of all of us.

She stops eating and picks at her nails.

SOMIN

I try...

He steals a bite of cake.

KIBUM

Come on, out with it.

SOMIN

I just- It doesn't feel nice when I come to work and do things a mother or a wife would do at home. That's not why I fought for this job.

KIBUM

I know.

SOMIN

You seem to be the only one who does.

She takes a sip of her coffee.

KIBUM

It's not just you. Why do you think
I gave up on the team dinners?

She looks up at him.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

They eat and drink through my money
like I'm their gullible hyung, not
their superior.

SOMIN

Team dinners are better in two
anyway.

She raises her mug for a toast. He clinks them together.

KIBUM

(nostalgic)

Exactly.

Kibum looks at her fondly, then glances over her shoulder.
SEO JOON and YUL enter the cafe.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

Well well well. Isn't that your
friend?

Somin turns around, theory-look back on her face.

SOMIN

Yes it is. With photographer Choi
again.

KIBUM

They close?

SOMIN

Apparently.
(to Seo Joon)
Hyung!

Seo Joon turns and comes towards her, looking livelier than
he's ever been.

Yul finds them a table and sits down, occasionally glancing
over to Seo Joon. He nods at Kibum.

Seo Joon bows to Kibum in greeting, receiving a nod back.

SEO JOON

(to Somin)

So that's why your phone kept
ringing. I called you earlier.

SOMIN

You did?

SEO JOON

I was thinking drinks. To thank you for my gift.

KIBUM

Oh?

SOMIN

I got him a notebook.

Kibum raises his eyebrows.

SEO JOON

Blank notebook.

KIBUM

Ah, that's a relief! For a second I thought that was the source of your... inspiration.

(beat)

It was a good article, that bath house hanging. You have a nice way with words.

Seo Joon avoids his gaze.

SEO JOON

Thank you.

Kibum catches Yul looking their way. He gets up.

KIBUM

Tell you what, I could use some drinks too. This place is too mellow for me.

SOMIN

Chief?

KIBUM

How about we all go somewhere together? Somewhere more fun.

Seo Joon wants to make an excuse, but-

KIBUM (CONT'D)

How about bowling? Does that sound good?

He looks at Somin for approval. She's onto him, although unsure of his reasons. Still-

SOMIN

Love it.

KIBUM

You did really good work today, so you deserve it. What do you think, reporter Kang?

SEO JOON

I don't know...

Somin gets up as well.

SOMIN

You were going to go out with me anyway. Kill two birds with one stone.

SEO JOON

Well, I suppose...

He glances back at Yul, concerned.

CUT TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY, BAR - NIGHT

The sound of a ball hitting pins fills the air as SEO JOON and SOMIN await their drinks at the bar.

SOMIN

Out with it. You've barely said a word all night.

SEO JOON

Does your chief always invite himself out?

SOMIN

He doesn't spend a lot of time with people with brains, so I guess he jumped at the opportunity.

SEO JOON

You admire him.

SOMIN

I do. He listens to what I say and asks for my opinion. That's rare.

Seo Joon gives her a knowing look.

SEO JOON

I see.

SOMIN

What's that supposed to mean?

Their drinks arrive. They each take two glasses of beer and walk over to YUL and KIBUM, mid-game.

CUT TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY, GAME AREA - CONTINUOUS

The scoreboard shows YUL's winning, but not by much. They're on the 7th frame already, KIBUM throwing.

SOMIN

Tease all you want, but I'm not the one being all weird.

SEO JOON

Huh?

SOMIN

You heard me. You look at photographer Choi like he's, I don't know, the sun.

SEO JOON

We're just partners, he helps me with the articles.

SOMIN

Is he? How so?

Beat.

SEO JOON

The pictures. You're the one who told me in the first place.

SOMIN

Right... Still, I feel like there's something else there.

(beat)

Just be careful.

SOMIN walks up to Kibum and hands him his drink.

Seo Joon offers Yul his beer, the graze of their fingers sending a jolt through his body. They exchange a look.

KIBUM
Miss Kim, Yul was just telling me
how this-

He gestures excitedly at Seo Joon and Yul.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
- came to be.

Seo Joon pulls back.

YUL
Triangle kimbap, right?

Seo Joon shoots him a "What the hell are you doing?" look.
Somin frowns, throwing a questioning look at Kibum and Yul.

KIBUM
They went for the same packet.

He puts a hand over his heart, faking a dramatically-
emotional look.

SOMIN
Ah.

She gives Yul a knowing, suspicious look.

SOMIN (CONT'D)
So how did you decide to become
partners then?

Yul looks at Seo Joon. He told her?

Kibum notices the exchange of glances.

KIBUM
Partners?

YUL
Are we going to finish the game or?

KIBUM
Oho, a secret! Now I'm even more
curious.

A beat.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
(to Seo Joon)
You know what, you should join in.
Finish up as two pairs.

SEO JOON
I'd rather just keep watching-

SOMIN
Oh come on, you just watched all night. Try and play a bit too, hm? Losers get more drinks or something?

KIBUM
You're always full of good ideas, miss Kim.

SOMIN
Photographer Choi?

They all look at him as the deciding vote.

YUL
I'm fine with it.

Seo Joon tries to mask the feeling of betrayal.

KIBUM
Miss Kim, it was your turn.

She checks the board: Kibum knocked down 8 pins already. She takes her aim and throws.

Seo Joon grabs Yul's arm, nervous and slightly pissed off.

SEO JOON
(hushed)
I don't know how-

YUL
It's fine. Even if you don't get anything we're still winning.

Somin gets the remaining 2 pins and returns to the group.

Kibum invites Seo Joon to the lanes.

YUL (CONT'D)
Come on, I'll show you.

Yul joins Seo Joon at the front of the alley, demonstrating a throw.

YUL (CONT'D)
What you need to do is take four steps. On the fourth, slide forward and throw the ball.

He grabs Seo Joon's arm and swings it, his touch lingering. Seo Joon becomes hyper aware, briefly glancing at Somin.

She raises her eyebrows. "I told you so". She and Kibum watch them like hawks.

Yul speaks softly right in his ear.

YUL (CONT'D)
You do the back swing-

His hand over Seo Joon's, he swings their arms back together.

YUL (CONT'D)
-and then slide forward.

He pushes into Seo Joon, both moving forward. Seo Joon is on fire, breathing erratic.

It only puzzles Somin and Kibum further.

YUL (CONT'D)
You got this.

He moves away, Seo Joon taking a deep breath before lifting the ball.

SOMIN
I've known him for years and he still tenses up when I get too close. How come he doesn't mind you?

YUL
I have a calming presence.

Somin tries to mask her unease.

Kibum chuckles.

Seo Joon's ball hits 4 pins, receiving a proud clap from Somin.

KIBUM
I'd be careful with the public displays though. Not everyone's so open minded.

Yul takes Kibum in before he moves to throw. Seo Joon rejoins the group.

SEO JOON
(to Yul)
Thank you.

Yul brushes a hand over his shoulder in acknowledgement.

Yul focuses before he throws, clearing the frame. Seo Joon looks at him with admiration.

Kibum takes his position.

He gets a strike.

SOMIN
Oho, go Chief!

They high five, Kibum squeezing her hand in thanks.

KIBUM
Reporter Kang.

Seo Joon reluctantly leaves Yul's side again, shaking his head. He aims.

Kibum gets an impish look on his face.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
So are you going to cover the
noraebang murder too?

Seo Joon throws.

YUL
Murder?

Gutter ball.

KIBUM
Sorry, suicide. The amount of
cases, it gets muddled up in my
noggin.

Seo Joon returns to the group as Yul picks up his ball.

SEO JOON
Why do you ask?

KIBUM
Just curious. Since it connects to
your other story.

Yul throws and clears the frame again.

YUL
Well I'm assigned to the case, so I
suppose he will.

Seo Joon's eyes widen. He and Somin turn to Kibum, trying to gauge his reaction.

Amusement.

Yul returns to the group.

KIBUM

So you're the guilty party!

(beat)

You really shouldn't be sharing your stuff around. And not cop to it so quickly either.

YUL

You clearly already knew, there was no point in dragging it on.

(beat)

Your turn.

Kibum stares him down, then moves to the lane.

Seo Joon's fingers tap his arm erratically, Somin watching him, worried. Kibum scores 6 points.

Somin hesitates before moving to the lane.

KIBUM

Nothing I say would keep you from sharing those saucy pictures anyway, right?

YUL

They're not from the official batch and they won't be published, so I don't see the problem.

KIBUM

They better not be.

2 of the remaining 4 pins are cleared.

Seo Joon moves to throw, but Yul pulls him back.

Yul aims and throws.

YUL

Do you care about the noraebang because of personal reasons?

A beat. The ball is rolling.

KIBUM

No.

SEO JOON
What personal reasons?

KIBUM
I think the past should be left in
the past.

Strike. Yul walks back.

YUL
That's what I said too, but it
seems you're not that good at
letting go.

Somin turns to Kibum, expecting an answer.

KIBUM
Well, not everyone can be like you.

Beat.

YUL
It was just a thought. Never mind.

Kibum takes a sip of beer, then prepares for the final frame.

Gutter.

KIBUM
Oops.

Despite Somin clearing the frame, they still lose.

The group finishes up their drinks.

Seo Joon nudges Yul to take his turn again.

SOMIN
(softly)
Do you want to share what that was
about?

Expectant faces.

KIBUM
In my more youthful days, I didn't
treat the job with the importance
it called for. I was sloppy and
careless, and because of that
someone got hurt.
(beat)
It all worked out in the end, but
since then, I've changed my
tactics. I'm wiser now. More alert.

He points at his eyes with two fingers, then points at Seo Joon and Yul, who just returned to the group, having knocked down all 10 pins.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

(to Yul)

Pity you transferred out right after. You didn't get to experience the real detective Lee Kibum.

YUL

I suppose I'll experience him plenty now that I'm back.

(beat)

I think someone mentioned drinks for the winners?

SOMIN

You didn't have to obliterate us like that, we lost already...

Yul shrugs, cheeky.

KIBUM

Well I'm bored of this place and the beer tastes like piss water, so let's pack up our toys and move somewhere else. I know just the place.

CUT TO:

EXT. ERI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

KIBUM pushes the door open for SOMIN, the two heading inside.

KIBUM

Hello~

SEO JOON catches the door before it closes and looks at YUL, who lingers back.

SEO JOON

Are you okay?

Yul takes his eyes off the restaurant sign and flashes his usual puppy smile. He comes closer.

YUL

Yeah.

(laughs)

Figures he'd want to come here.

SEO JOON
We can go if you want-

YUL
No. Let's see this through. I want
my free drinks.

Seo Joon laughs.

CUT TO:

INT. ERI RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The dimly-lit place is crammed, but homey, and would definitely be packed if not for the late hour.

YUL lets himself be led through the array of tables, holding on to the back SEO JOON's jacket as they reach SOMIN and KIBUM.

They sit down, drinks already on the table.

Yul immediately grabs a napkin and starts folding.

SOMIN
I got us some pork belly too.
Because I'm incredibly nice and I'm
in a giving mood.

Thank you all around the table.

Kibum's attention is solely on Yul, shining smile plastered on his face.

KIBUM
Hasn't changed a bit, right?

YUL
Less noisy than I remember.

KIBUM
That's what 11 years will do to a
place.
(beat)
I wonder how the others are doing.

YUL
I wouldn't know.

Kibum sighs, turning to Somin and Seo Joon.

KIBUM

It's easier to move a mountain than convince our Yul to go out with the team.

YUL

It's not you, it's me.

KIBUM

Ha! No, but really. It's so nice to see you actually befriend someone and do something other than work.

He looks at Seo Joon.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

I don't know if you can tell, but he's quite the loner.

SOMIN

That makes two of them.

Seo Joon glares, with no bite to it.

A hand breezes past, plate of pork belly now in the middle of their table.

SEO JOON

I'm not a loner, I just... don't feel comfortable with a lot of people.

YUL

Exactly.

They wait for Kibum to start before they all dig in, sans Yul.

SOMIN

He's right though, he doesn't loosen up even after a whole night of drinking.

SEO JOON

Alcohol doesn't affect me anymore, I've gotten used to drinking away my sorrows.

Kibum finds it hilarious, but Yul glances at him with slight worry. He pushes his creation - a rose - to Seo Joon and grabs a piece of meat.

Somin watches them curiously, Yul catching her eye.

YUL
 So what's up with you two?
 (to Kibum)
 I thought you kept dating strictly
 in the red light district.

Somin almost chokes on her drink.

KIBUM
 Nothing's up, we're colleagues.

YUL
 I don't see the other colleagues
 here.

SOMIN
 Because they're moronic.

YUL
 (chuckles)
 That's a mentality I can get
 behind.

SOMIN
 Might be mean, but doesn't make it
 any less true.

Yul raises his glass. She clinks it, amused.

A moment, everyone busying themselves with their food and drinks.

Kibum starts playing with his glass, watching the drink swirl.

KIBUM
 Sorry, excuse my backtracking here,
 it's just been bothering me ever
 since you said it.
 (beat)
 If you write using his pictures,
 there's one tiny thing about the
 hanging that doesn't add up.

Seo Joon frowns.

SOMIN
 The article was out before the
 pictures.

KIBUM
 Ding ding ding! How did that come
 to be?

He turns his attention to a panicked Seo Joon.

YUL
You really can't let go, can you?

KIBUM
My bad.

YUL
There's working a case, and then there's obsessing over something that isn't there.

KIBUM
I'm only trying to tie up loose ends, and hoped reporter Kang can help. Since he's a witness.

SOMIN
Being in the same building doesn't make him a witness...

Yul nods in agreement.

SOMIN (CONT'D)
But I'd like an explanation as well.

YUL
(in disbelief)
Come on.

KIBUM
If there's nothing to hide then there's no reason not to answer.

YUL
You-

SEO JOON
I was there.

Everyone freezes. It's eerily silent.

They turn to Seo Joon.

SOMIN
What do you mean?

YUL
Seo Joon-

SEO JOON

Being alone, having nothing,
feeling worthless... Thinking a
rope is my only choice. I was there
too. I know what it's like.

SOMIN

What?

SEO JOON

It's vivid because I drew from my
own experience. I put myself in his
shoes because I've been there. The
rest is just from the glimpses I
could get when I talked to you two.

He gestures to Kibum and Somin.

KIBUM

This is very open of you.

SEO JOON

It's the truth, I'm not embarrassed
by it. And you asked.

SOMIN

Why didn't you say anything?

Seo Joon shrugs, picking at his band-aid. Kibum notices.

SEO JOON

I didn't feel like it mattered.

Somin reaches across the table and hits his chest.

SOMIN

I'm your friend, Seo Joon!

SEO JOON

It didn't seem so at the time. At
least to me. I don't know...

KIBUM

But you're still here. What stopped
you from...?

Expectant, curious looks again. Seo Joon steals a glance at
Yul.

SEO JOON

Stalling.

Yul tries to control his smile.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
By the time I could do it, it
didn't feel right anymore.

KIBUM
Why? What changed?

A moment.

SEO JOON
I found something to live for.

He avoids Yul's eyes. Somin grabs his hand and squeezes.

SOMIN
You're not alone, idiot. Ever.

SEO JOON
I know.

SOMIN
Don't ever let something like this
fester again. Anything like this
starts to happen again, you tell
me. We'll work it out together.

He nods, squeezing back.

SEO JOON
Excuse me.

He ducks into the bathroom, Somin hesitating before she
follows.

YUL
Are you done fishing now?

Kibum looks down, pensive.

KIBUM
You avoid me- no, everyone. You
avoid everyone for a decade, but
suddenly when it's time to come
back you come with reporter Kang
stuck to your side.

YUL
So?

A moment.

KIBUM
So what's going on?! We used to
tell each other everything.

Yul avoids his eyes, masking the slight hurt.

YUL
I never told you anything.
(beat)
I'll wait for him outside. Thanks
for the outing.

Kibum is left staring at the empty space Yul left behind,
heartbroken.

CUT TO:

INT. ERI RESTAURANT, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

SEO JOON is washing his hands, band-aid off, when SOMIN comes
in.

She tries to avert her eyes from anything she shouldn't see
and stays rooted near the door. They're the only ones there.

SEO JOON
I should block you from coming in
this time.

SOMIN
Haha.
(beat)
It was him, right?

She takes a step forward as he turns to face her.

SEO JOON
Yes.

SOMIN
Is it... what I said?

He takes a deep breath as she stops in front of him.

SEO JOON
It wasn't- No. I don't think. I
just wanted someone to know. To
care.
(beat)
And no one did.

SOMIN
But-

SEO JOON

In my head, nobody did. I don't know, it was like this gaping hole between me and... everything else. I refused to believe I mattered to anyone.

She holds his hands.

SOMIN

Well believe it. I know I'm not around as much, but I still love you.

Seo Joon bites his lower lip. He smiles at her.

SEO JOON

I know now. But then...

He looks at Somin.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

I kept looking around, wondering why no one was asking me what was wrong, feeling smaller and smaller, hoping that someone would show me an ounce of care.

Seo Joon chuckles.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

And it happened to be him.

SOMIN

The kimbap?

SEO JOON

Yeah... As stupid as that sounds.

She smiles.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

And it wasn't just that, he just... kept showing concern. He... saw me.

SOMIN

He told me you met on a crime scene though. Why did he lie?

SEO JOON

(hesitant)
He didn't.

A moment.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
It happened on the same day. The
kimbap and the- Incident.

SOMIN
Okay...
(beat)
What about... the other stuff?

He lets go of her hands and throws the band-aid in the trash.

SEO JOON
I don't know. I try to find words
for it, but I come up empty.

SOMIN
Try.

He looks at her, then away, taking a deep breath.

SEO JOON
You know I'm not... used to that
kind of thing. At all.
(beat)
But... I just know I want to
always... feel him? It's weird,
but whenever he isn't there I feel
like he should be, and I just want
to- I don't know.

SOMIN
And when he is?

SEO JOON
It burns? It jolts me awake? Or
aware? I really don't know, there's
just this rush, like thunder. I
just need to feel him, under my
hands, that he's there and he's-

SOMIN
Yours.

They lock eyes. A moment.

SEO JOON
It's so... There's so many things
about this that are completely
wrong, I know that, and it eats
away at me constantly, but I
just... can't help it.
(beat)
He makes everything feel right.
Like it's how it's supposed to be.

SOMIN

I get it.

She smiles at him, fond but with a tinge of heartbreak.

A moment.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

Do you... love him?

SEO JOON

No.

(beat)

No, that's too much.

She laughs.

SOMIN

I don't think I ever heard you say
"I love you". You always beat
around the bush with it.

SEO JOON

I don't feel comfortable throwing
that word around.

Somin hugs him.

SOMIN

I'll do it for you. I love you,
hyung. Don't doubt that again.

He hesitates before hugging her back.

SEO JOON

Me too.

A moment.

They break apart when KIBUM enters. He stops in the door.

KIBUM

We called it a night. He's waiting
for you outside.

Seo Joon smiles at Somin, squeezing her hands one more time
as Kibum watches, noticing the absence of a band-aid.

Seo Joon tries to move past Kibum.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

Wait.

(beat)

(MORE)

KIBUM (CONT'D)
I apologise, reporter Kang. It
wasn't my place.

SEO JOON
You couldn't have known.

A moment.

KIBUM
I'm glad you're better now.

Seo Joon bows in thanks. He heads out.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
Come on, Miss Kim. I'll walk you
home.

SOMIN
You don't have to-

KIBUM
But I should.

He holds the door open for her.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
Actually, give me a second. Too
much beer.

Kibum lets the door close behind Somin. His fingers dance
over the stall doors, but he enters none.

Instead, he takes a bunch of tissues and goes to the trash
next to the sink, picking out Seo Joon's band-aid. He hides
it in his pocket, then heads out.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANYANG, STREET - NIGHT

SEO JOON and YUL are taking their time walking, occasionally
bumping into each other. The street's covered in shadows from
the trees, fallen leaves everywhere.

YUL
You handled that... not like I
expected.

SEO JOON
He didn't buy it though.

YUL
No, he didn't.

Quiet for a moment. Seo Joon nudges Yul with his elbow.

SEO JOON
Did you think I was going to tell
them?

YUL
It crossed my mind.

SEO JOON
I didn't lie though.

YUL
That makes it worse, you tricked
them without lying. What has become
of you?

SEO JOON
You did too, you basically told
them what we're doing!

YUL
But I didn't really.

SEO JOON
"Yeah, I'm giving him confidential
police photographs, so what?"
(beat)
We couldn't possibly look more
guilty.

YUL
Guilty of reporting about suicides,
that's all.

SEO JOON
(mocking)
That's all.
(beat)
They're really beautiful pictures
though.

Yul's pinky brushes against Seo Joon's. He steals a glance.

YUL
Really?

SEO JOON
It's... Odd, but yes.

YUL

Odd?

SEO JOON

It's just... I've always had trouble seeing the beauty in things. It was always just... an image or a space or an object serving a purpose to me, nothing more.

(beat)

Now... especially when I look at your pictures, it's like thousands of stories are coming to life in my head.

Yul smiles.

YUL

Told you. Everything you do and see feels alive, right?

SEO JOON

Right.

A moment.

YUL

You don't have to worry. I'll keep us safe.

SEO JOON

I know.

Yul laces his fingers with Seo Joon's. Seo Joon keeps his head down.

YUL

"Something to live for", hm?

SEO JOON

Shut up.

They walk quietly, arriving in a dimly-lit, poor residential area. Seo Joon slows down and looks around.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

What are we doing here?

Yul pulls on Seo Joon's hand, moving closer to a particular building. He leans against the wall.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
(flustered)
What are we doing?

Their hands dangle at their side, clasped together loosely.

YUL
There's still one more thing to
take care of. Before we're safe.

Realisation.

SEO JOON
The shameless old man.

Yul laughs.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
Is this where he lives? How did you-

YUL
I looked through his things when I
changed.

SEO JOON
(warning)
Yul...

Seo Joon's pulled closer, Yul's other hand reaching to cup his face. Yul looks for approval in Seo Joon's eyes, which drift down to his lips.

Yul leans in, noses nudging. He whispers against Seo Joon's lips, as close to a kiss as they could get.

YUL
After this we'll be safe. Trust me.

Seo Joon nuzzles into him, shy but as if pulled in.

SEO JOON
But Chief Lee...

YUL
Has nothing but a paranoid
fixation. Not even he can draw
blood from a stone.

Seo Joon hesitates, hands clinging to Yul's jacket.

SEO JOON
I don't... After this we're done.
(beat)
Promise me.

Yul nods, but withdraws before he can lean in, much to Seo Joon's annoyance.

Yul smiles playfully, his eyes never leaving Seo Joon's as he pulls him inside the building.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

Bastard.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANYANG, RESIDENTIAL AREA - NIGHT

Streetlights bathe the hills of somewhat decent houses in an orange hue.

KIBUM and SOMIN walk at a slow pace, heads down, each lost in their own thoughts.

SOMIN

He was going through all that, he almost died, and he never said anything.

KIBUM

He did to Yul though.

SOMIN

The sad part is, now that I know, it all came back to me. He was acting weird, I should've seen it.

KIBUM

You couldn't have.

SOMIN

But he did.

KIBUM

Right timing.

SOMIN

That's not-

She looks up, her surroundings registering with her.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

Oh, we must've taken a wrong turn, this isn't-

KIBUM

I know.

She stops walking, but seems more puzzled than anything else.
Kibum kicks pebbles at his feet.

Somin takes a step toward Kibum.

SOMIN

Chief?

KIBUM

You're better than any detective
that walks through the precinct.

He looks up at her.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

You catch onto things others don't
even see when you point them out.
You're the only one whose judgement
I trust.

(beat)

My mind's been all over the place
lately. There's so many things I've
started questioning, doubting, over-
analysing. I can't be sure of
anything. But... I think need you.

SOMIN

And you have me. You know that.

KIBUM

This is different.

Beat.

SOMIN

I stand by what I said.

They lock eyes.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

Whatever it is, you have me.

He searches her eyes, making up his mind.

KIBUM

If you come with me, you can't turn
back.

Her hand lowers to grasp his.

SOMIN

Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT. KIBUM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

KIBUM holds the door open, the light from outside sneaking into the tiny hall. He comes up behind SOMIN.

The air is practically sucked out of the cramped space.

His hands graze over her shoulders, taking her coat off slowly. She swallows. Her head turns towards him slightly.

KIBUM

Come on in.

He leads her inside the living room, flicking the light switch on.

Somin's dazed look is short lived as she frowns the second she takes in the room.

There are clothes scattered all over the floor, racy magazines, a lot of empty bottles and ramen cups or food wrappers everywhere.

What's strange is all the case files, pictures, and other documents, scattered around like a storm passed through.

SOMIN

What the...

CUT TO:

INT. SEO JOON'S FLAT - NIGHT

YUL pulls SEO JOON inside the small flat. Stacks of papers are littered all over, but everything else is decently organised. A record plays in the background.

SEO JOON

It's late, we really shouldn't-

Yul brings him closer, swaying together to the music as their foreheads touch. He laces their fingers together, eyes glued to Seo Joon's lips. Yul kisses him, deep and slow.

With a brief, sharp intake of breath, Seo Joon melts into the kiss and moves his lips against Yul's, inexperienced but eager.

He's guided to the wall, pushed against it as Yul kisses down his neck.

They share a look, Yul planting quick, chaste kisses on his lips as his hands move to Seo Joon's belt.

Seo Joon looks down for a brief second, but when he looks up he sees KIBUM instead of Yul, smirking.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG NEWS - DAY

EDITOR KIM hits a sleeping SEO JOON over the head, waking him up. Every typewriter in the office stops.

As Seo Joon glances up, he meets an irritated fake smile.

EDITOR KIM
Am I interrupting anything?

Seo Joon gets up and bows in apology.

SEO JOON
I apologise, sir. I've barely slept-

EDITOR KIM
Clearly nothing to do with your work though.

He slaps an article on the desk.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)
A burglary?

SEO JOON
It's-

EDITOR KIM
Not what you do here.

SEO JOON
Sir...

EDITOR KIM
You're the suicide reporter! And sadly, there's still plenty of those going around.

Seo Joon looks down, clearly bothered as well.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)
What about the murder a few days ago?

SEO JOON
Sir?

EDITOR KIM

If you got tired of suicides, or
can't handle them anymore. Switch
to murders, I don't care.

SEO JOON

I can't.

EDITOR KIM

Did your source disappear?

SEO JOON

No.

EDITOR KIM

Could they offer you information on
this murder?

SEO JOON

(reluctant)

Yes, but-

EDITOR KIM

Then what's the problem?!

SEO JOON

I. I can't cover that, sir.

EDITOR KIM

Is your stomach really that weak?

No answer.

EDITOR KIM (CONT'D)

Did you think you'd cover two
deaths and that would be that?
You'd shoot to fame? Kid, this is
something that lasts a lifetime!

SEO JOON

I know.

EDITOR KIM

Do you?

Beat.

SEO JOON

It's just too risky now. I don't
want to get anyone in trouble.

Editor Kim sighs.

EDITOR KIM

I understand that, kid. But in this job you're in constant competition. You can't worry about other people, your story comes first.

SEO JOON

I submitted the burglary to make up for it. I apologise, sir.

Editor Kim backs away, disappointed.

EDITOR KIM

I really thought you'd make better use of this second chance. You won't get a third,
(beat)
Mister Kang.

He walks away.

EDITOR KIM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Someone get me my lunch! I'm starving!

Seo Joon sits back down and looks around, the typewriters resuming as if nothing's happened.

The sound of the keys grows increasingly louder as all of the reporters seem to morph into clones of each other, each desk typing rapidly and putting out article after article after article.

All worthless. Basic. Average.

Seo Joon yanks open his desk drawer and takes out his notebook. He flips through it, the wilted flower from the pub and the two napkin flowers now pressed between the pages, as are the previous photos.

He stops at a fresh set of pictures, taken inside a shabby apartment.

His fingers itch to start typing when a ring erupts.

Seo Joon picks up quickly.

SEO JOON

Anyang News, Kang Seo Joon.

YUL (V.O.)

Very professional.

A small smile before Seo Joon gets a hold of himself.

SEO JOON
What's going on?

YUL (V.O.)
Nothing. Just haven't heard your
voice in a while.
(beat)
What were you doing?

Seo Joon looks at his now closed drawer.

SEO JOON
(passive)
At work.

A moment.

YUL (V.O.)
You can't use those.

SEO JOON
I know.

Moments pass.

YUL (V.O.)
Meet me after work.

SEO JOON
Are we-

YUL (V.O.)
You'll see.

CUT TO:

INT. KIBUM'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

SOMIN - dressed casually - is sitting on the sofa watching television. The place is way tidier now.

Next to Somin is also a small mongrel - Mongryong, his head resting on her leg.

KIBUM comes out of the kitchen, carrying a tray with two steaming mugs of coffee and a newspaper under his arm. He's in his pyjamas.

KIBUM
Thanks for making me tidy up.

Mongryong perks up. Somin smiles brightly at him.

SOMIN

I get being an emotional hoarder,
but that doesn't apply to food
wrappers.

KIBUM

They carry meaning and memories
too.

Kibum places the tray on the table, next to a carefully
stacked pile of police files.

Somin accepts her coffee with a thankful nod, but doesn't
drink, instead looking up at Kibum, who makes no move to sit.

SOMIN

Everything okay?

He chuckles and slumps on the sofa. He passes Somin the
newspaper, head resting on her shoulder.

Mongryong gets off and disappears in the other room.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

"Home invasion ends in death. By
Yang Shin Hye."

(relieved sigh)

He didn't write about it.

KIBUM

No, he did not.

Somin puts the newspaper down and picks up the file on top,
perusing it.

SOMIN

You can't be sure it's them. Him.

KIBUM

Yul took the pictures, and a murder
case goes a long way for a
reporter. It's everything they'd
want and need. So why didn't he
write about it?

SOMIN

Because you made them uncomfortable
with your "subtle" interrogation.

(beat)

You can't assume that every murder
or death is their doing.

KIBUM

But it might be...

SOMIN

You're doing exactly what
photographer Choi said. You're
letting your past mistake cloud
your judgement.

A moment.

KIBUM

I'm trying not to. That's why I
asked for your help.

SOMIN

But if it's not what you want to
hear, you won't listen.

Kibum lifts his head and puts some distance between them.

KIBUM

What I want to hear is indisputable
proof that I'm 100% wrong.

Somin looks at crime scene pictures of the Old Man, face down
on the kitchen floor.

The back of his head is covered in gaping wounds, blood
dribbling down. Surrounding him is a pool of blood, a broken
bottle resting near him.

She grimaces.

She turns to a different picture, where the bottle is shot as
a close-up, blood tainting its sharp edges.

SOMIN

Even if the first two cases are
shady, this one doesn't point to
them at all.

He signals he's listening.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

It's not framed as a suicide, the
level of violence is much higher,
not to mention this victim had no
connection to the bath house.

KIBUM

Deviate from the pattern to throw
us off the trail.

SOMIN

Chief...

(beat)

(MORE)

SOMIN (CONT'D)

What we have can't even be called a trail. It's just assumptions.

KIBUM

And the other stuff?

She picks up the other files, presenting them to Kibum one by one.

SOMIN

Mother's death? Nothing suggests it's anything but the official story.

An empty nod.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

Teen at Haneul Center? A fall. Accidental. It happens all the time.

KIBUM

Through a closed window?

SOMIN

People trip.

Kibum shakes his head in disbelief.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

Corporal Yoo? On leave. Maybe he deserted.

KIBUM

Des- Really?

SOMIN

All I'm saying is it could be a million other things-

He gets up.

KIBUM

They're all connected to him!

SOMIN

And that doesn't say anything more than he's had a tough life. You can't call someone a murderer just because of some coincidences.

He rummages through the files, opening one and desperately pointing to a report.

KIBUM

And the hanging? It just happens that he went to the same group home as the victim?

SOMIN

I... The case is circumstantial at best is all I'm saying.

KIBUM

Whether it can stand up in court or not isn't what matters here, and we both know that.

A moment.

SOMIN

How well do you know him?

KIBUM

Not as well as I thought...

(beat)

What about Seo Joon?

SOMIN

I know him well enough to know he wouldn't... he can't do something like this.

KIBUM

Really? Cause you didn't even know he wanted to die until I got it out of him weeks later.

She gets up and hits him in the chest. He stumbles back.

KIBUM (CONT'D)

I'm sorry-

SOMIN

I'm here because you trusted me to be objective. Clear headed. Rational. I get you're incapable of that right now, but that doesn't excuse you being an asshole.

He reaches for her. Somin pushes his hand away and walks to the door, putting her coat and shoes on.

KIBUM

Som- where are you-

SOMIN
 No physical proof, no witnesses.
 You have nothing but theories.

He follows her.

KIBUM
 Theories you know are right.

She stops midway through tying her shoe.

SOMIN
 All I know is that we have nothing.
 And until something concrete is
 found, I'm not going to accuse Seo
 Joon, or photographer Choi of
 anything.

KIBUM
 You think I'm happy about this? You
 think I want this? He's my friend!

SOMIN
 If that's how you treat your
 friends...

Kibum reaches out for her again, gentler this time.

Somin lets herself be pulled close. She shakes her head as he
 rests his forehead against hers, eyes closed.

KIBUM
 I know you don't want to, but...

He brushes a strand of hair behind her ear, cupping her face.
 He pulls back and looks at her.

She indulges him for a moment, her hands over his, squeezing.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
 Come back inside.

A moment.

SOMIN
 You can't snap whenever things
 don't go your way.

KIBUM
 I know. I'm sorry.

She lets herself be led back inside.

CUT TO:

EXT. YONGMA LAND AMUSEMENT PARK, ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The amusement park looks magical, especially in the early November cold.

SEO JOON takes it all in: the stalls lit by fairy lights draped all over, steam from food warming the air, a sea of joyful, bright smiles.

SEO JOON
It all looks... otherworldly.

YUL chuckles.

YUL
Have you never been to one of these before?

Seo Joon shakes his head.

SEO JOON
It's like a wonderland.

Yul grabs Seo Joon's hand.

YUL
Come on, I want to play.

CUT TO:

EXT. YONGMA LAND THEME PARK, STALLS AREA - CONTINUOUS

As they walk around, SEO JOON stares at every light, game stall, and food stand. Seeing him so fascinated, YUL can't help but smile.

He spots a stall with plush toys and pulls Seo Joon to it.

It's a simple game of skill: Balloon and Dart game.

YUL
Bet I can win the sheep.

SEO JOON
Food's on me if you can.

Yul takes his position, concentrating on his aim.

Seo Joon watches him as he hits balloon after balloon, a focused frown on his face. Seo Joon's eyes dart up and down, longing.

Yul hands him the sheep.

YUL
It's childish...

SEO JOON
No. I like it. I never got to do
this before.

YUL
(cutely)
I want rice cakes.

Seo Joon gestures to the food stand, walking towards it. He puts the sheep in his shoulder bag, top half sticking out.

SEO JOON
Two tteokbokki, please.

Yul sticks to his back, hands subtly reaching under his jacket to touch his waist and straying lower.

Seo Joon quickly shrugs him off, accepts the two boxes of rice cakes and moves away from the line, handing one to a disappointed Yul.

YUL
Thank you.

Seo Joon's hand stops mid-air as he looks around for another game stand. Yul steals the rice cake.

SEO JOON
Ya, you have your own.

YUL
Here, sorry.

He holds one of his own to Seo Joon's mouth.

Seo Joon wraps his lips around the chopsticks and pulls the food back slowly, eyes locked with Yul's.

Yul can't stop staring.

Seo Joon starts walking ahead, embarrassed but proud. Yul follows suit.

SEO JOON
I want to play that.

He stops at a game of chance: Pingpong ball and Fishbowl.

YUL
Feeling lucky?

SEO JOON

Not really.

He gives Yul his food, fingers brushing.

He stretches his hand and aims his ball. He shoots, but it doesn't get in.

He tries again. It still doesn't go in.

A disembodied voice informs him he only has a chance left.

Seo Joon risks a brief glance to Yul, who watches him with a fond look.

He sighs, preparing for another throw.

YUL

(softly)

You got this.

It gets in. Yul's grin could rival the sun.

YUL (CONT'D)

Yes!

Seo Joon gratefully accepts the tiny gift, a mackerel keyring. He offers it to Yul in return for getting his food box back.

YUL (CONT'D)

Where to next?

SEO JOON

I don't know, you're in charge.

Yul looks around as he accepts another rice cake from Seo Joon, eyes locking on Whack-a-mole. He quickly polishes off his own food, throws the box in the trash and prances over.

Seo Joon eats as Yul gets ready to strike down. Despite the comical sounds, Seo Joon's mind drifts off as he watches Yul.

WHACK!

A bottle hitting skin. Smashing.

WHACK!

Stabbing.

WHACK!

A Yul towering over the Old Man, looking up at Seo Joon. The Yul playing whack-a-mole turning back with a euphoric smile.

WHACK!

Blood pooling.

Seo Joon bites his lip and looks down at his food, bits of rice cake floating in the red paste.

WHACK!

Blood spurting everywhere. On Seo Joon's face-

WHACK!

Seo Joon looks back at Yul, sauce dripping off his lips. He flings his box of food in the trash.

Yul leaves the game and offers Seo Joon the small wolf plushie he won, but Seo Joon makes no move to take it.

YUL

You okay?

Seo Joon looks at Yul, taking all of him in: the spark in his big, warm eyes, the crinkles under them when he smiles, his nose, his rosy lips, parted and inviting, his hands, warm and stained with blood only they know about.

For him.

Yul cocks an eyebrow and leans in, questioning.

Seo Joon snaps to and takes a step back as he accepts the wolf, clinging to it.

SEO JOON

I'm fine.
(beat)
Where to?

Reluctant to take his eyes off Seo Joon, Yul scans the area, stopping on a towering, menacing roller coaster.

Seo Joon turns around and pales.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

No.

YUL

It's not that scary.

SEO JOON
Perhaps, but no.

Yul steps closer.

YUL
You'll like it once you try it.

Seo Joon shakes his head.

YUL (CONT'D)
You've seen things way more
terrifying than a pile of metal.

Seo Joon gulps. Yul holds his hand.

YUL (CONT'D)
You can hold onto me the entire
time.

He doesn't budge.

YUL (CONT'D)
Fine, I won't make you do anything
you don't want to.

Yul walks away. Seo Joon grabs his hand and turns him around.
He's fidgeting, still unsure.

SEO JOON
If I die, it's on you.

Yul smiles.

YUL
I'd never let you die.

CUT TO:

INT. SEOUL-ANYANG BUS - NIGHT

The dimly lit bus is empty except for SEO JOON and YUL, who sit quietly as they watch the passing lights. Yul rests his head on Seo Joon's shoulder.

Seo Joon stiffens when Yul nuzzles into him, fingers lacing with his, thumb stroking his hand.

A moment.

YUL
Are you gonna tell me what's been
bothering you?

SEO JOON

Noth-

YUL

Don't lie.

Beat.

SEO JOON

It's too much.

(beat)

And it's not enough.

He laughs softly.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)

I'm scared. That what I feel- what I've been feeling- is making me overlook things that should appall me. And that these feelings aren't even for the right reasons.

(beat)

I don't want to use you.

YUL

You think you're using me?

SEO JOON

I don't want to think I am... I want my feelings to be genuine, even if that's... even more terrifying.

(beat)

I just can't help but think I'm being selfish. And that I want to be... around you, just because of what you give me. Or what you do for me.

Yul chuckles.

YUL

Trust me, you give plenty back just by being here with me.

A moment.

YUL (CONT'D)

When people leave...

Seo Joon glances down at him.

YUL (CONT'D)

I can't bear it.

He tightens his hold on Seo Joon's hand.

YUL (CONT'D)

Those... people I photographed before... they were all precious to me. But some way or another, they all ended up leaving. I ended up... making them leave.

Beat.

YUL (CONT'D)

I found my mother before she- She was hanging there, choking, thrashing, just like- I froze. All I could do was watch.

Beat.

YUL (CONT'D)

She couldn't bear it, without my father. Not even for me.

(beat)

Afterwards, it kept following me around. A push ended in a deadly fall, a blooming relationship into- Whatever I did, whoever came into my life, death took them away.

Yul lifts his head up and looks at Seo Joon, who reluctantly returns his gaze. They take each other in.

A moment.

YUL (CONT'D)

When Kibum and I got closer, I knew it'd happen again somehow. He'd find out and I'd have to... So I left, and all was well. But then he forced me to come back.

(beat)

Then I saw my old... friend again, and I thought I found a way out. It all caught up to me and it was finally my time. He'd been apparently looking for me ever since the group home, and I knew all I had to do was tip him over the edge. Kill two birds with one stone.

Seo Joon squeezes his hand instinctively, teary eyed.

YUL (CONT'D)

But then you...

(chuckles)

For the first time, death didn't
take away. It wasn't because of me.
It was for me. To save me.

SEO JOON

Why didn't you say anything?

YUL

I just got you, I didn't want to
lose you.

Yul searches his eyes and gulps.

YUL (CONT'D)

You said you were given a second
chance that night, but so was I.
And now, when I think that you
might leave too...

(beat)

I don't think I could live like
that.

Seo Joon hides his face in Yul's chest.

A sigh. Yul's fingers thread through his hair.

SEO JOON

I ache for you so much. Like a pull
I can't control, and it's
terrifying. I'm powerless.

YUL

I know...

Seo Joon shakes his head.

Yul lifts Seo Joon's head up, hands cupping his face. He
looks into his eyes.

YUL (CONT'D)

I love you.

Seo Joon lets out a heavy exhale, laughing in disbelief.

The bus stops, doors opening with a whoosh. Yul gets up
first, hand extending.

Seo Joon looks at him.

He takes his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. YUL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

YUL pulls SEO JOON inside. The apartment is plain, absent of anything other than the bare necessities.

Muffled, drunken yells can be heard from below.

SEO JOON
Lovely neighbours.

YUL
It's like that every night, ignore
it.

Yul lets their hands dangle, waiting.

Seo Joon's thumb smooths over Yul's cheek, his breathing hard and rapid. He wets his lips and leans in, noses nudging.

Yul doesn't push, lets Seo Joon lead. Their voices are close to a whisper.

SEO JOON
God, you're...

Yul nuzzles into him.

Seo Joon tries a shy, chaste kiss. Yul smiles.

SEO JOON (CONT'D)
It's like I'm drowning.

YUL
I know.

Another kiss, bolder.

Seo Joon looks into Yul's eyes. He takes a deep breath.

SEO JOON
I... love you.

Another kiss, both melting into it. Yul's hands drift to Seo Joon's neck, a gentle caress.

YUL
I love you.

Seo Joon's hands get bolder, running over Yul's chest before he takes his shirt off.

There's no trace of bruises over Yul's ribs, but Seo Joon runs his fingers over them anyway.

Yul smiles and lets him touch, watching him curiously as his hands explore. Seo Joon toys with the key dangling off his neck, eyebrows raised.

YUL (CONT'D)

This doesn't matter anymore. I promised you it wouldn't.

Seo Joon nods.

Yul nuzzles into him, hand caressing his cheek.

A deep, passionate kiss.

Yul's hand brushes down, in between kisses, from Seo Joon's cheek to his jaw, then neck, his shoulder, down his arm, finally grazing over his hand.

He takes it, gently, and pulls Seo Joon deeper into the flat.

CUT TO:

INT. BATH HOUSE - DAY

KIBUM prances around, but he shows off to no one, as the place is completely secluded. Despite the spring in his step, he looks exhausted.

He peeks into the COMMON ROOM, but finds nothing.

Checks the LOCKER ROOM, but finds nothing.

He pops his head inside the SAUNA, eyes lingering for a second, but again, nothing.

Eventually he climbs up the stairs, where the canteen sits, empty and covered in dust.

He takes out his notebook and flips over several pages. He reads off it:

KIBUM

"Kang Seo Joon. AnNews. Sauna & shower, dinner w/ unknown male, bed".

(beat)

Dinner?

Kibum looks around. Clearly not here.

He paces, moving towards the window when something catches his attention.

CUT TO:

INT. INFINITY PUB - DAY

KIBUM is sat at a table, surrounded by an array of food, as well as the case file on the hanging.

Crime scene photos are scattered all over, one between Kibum's fingers - a front-facing photo of the entire body, still hanging from the beam.

Kibum looks at the lower half of the photo, then turns to the autopsy report.

KIBUM
(under his breath)
"Blood and skin traces found under victim's nails. Blood also found on victim's feet."

A glance back at the photo, then a turn to a blood test report.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
"Blood samples don't match each other, or the victim."
(beat)
Sauna burns, my ass.

AUNTIE
Everything good?

He blinks up.

KIBUM
Oh yes! Thank you so much!

He flashes an endearing smile, but it comes across slightly creepy.

The auntie moves to return to the kitchen-

KIBUM (CONT'D)
Actually, sorry. May I steal a bit of your time?

AUNTIE

Of course!

KIBUM

Would you happen to recall being in work on October 7th, night shift?

AUNTIE

Honey, I own this little place. I'm always here.

KIBUM

Ah, wonderful! Do you remember serving this person that night?

He rummages through his wallet and takes out a picture: a group of officers on a team dinner, well over a decade ago. Except for Kibum and Yul's, the faces of the others have faded with age.

Kibum points to Yul.

The Auntie leans in and squints.

AUNTIE

Ah yes! He was here with the fidgety one!

KIBUM

Oh?

AUNTIE

I thought they'd devour everything and leave, but their appetite only lasted a few minutes. Then they didn't know how to drag it on longer. I thought they'd never go.

(beat)

Why? Did they do anything?

KIBUM

Ah no, I'm just a concerned friend.

AUNTIE

Ah!

She leans in, hand shielding her mouth.

Kibum humours her, leaning closer as well, looking dramatically attentive.

AUNTIE (CONT'D)
(close to whispering)
If you ask me, something was going
on with those two.

KIBUM
(same tone)
How so?

AUNTIE
They seemed lost in their own
world. And worried about something.

KIBUM
Ooh!

AUNTIE
And the way they looked at each
other...

She shakes her head and rubs her arms, as if she just got the
chills.

AUNTIE (CONT'D)
A paying customer is a paying
customer, but they were lucky no
one else saw them, or...

KIBUM
You stole the words right out of my
mouth.
(beat)
Thank you ma'am, this was very
helpful.

She nods then bows and takes her leave.

A moment.

A small, defeated laugh escapes Kibum.

He stares at the Yul in the picture - younger, seemingly
innocent, looking as if he'd rather be anywhere but there,
but still accepting Kibum's arm around his shoulder.

Kibum sighs.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
Love made you sloppy.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG POLICE STATION, HOMICIDE SQUAD ROOM - DAY

SOMIN is sat at her desk, staring at her open notebook. There are only two words written: *TROPHIES* underlined and circled several times, then *PHOTOS?* in lighter ink, written a bit lower.

She rips up the paper and crumbles it, throwing it in the trash.

Somin turns her attention to a box. She takes out plastic bag after plastic bag of evidence.

KIBUM

What's that?

He peers over her desk.

SOMIN

Victim belongings for the home invasion. Also known as a bunch of useless trash. This was what they found in his pockets.

She puts a pair of gloves on and turns a bag upside down, a bunch of trinkets falling out: tissues, coins, wrappers, a lighter, and - bingo.

A receipt for the bath house.

She holds it up and reads it. Then reads it again.

KIBUM

What?

Somin reluctantly shows him.

SOMIN

Chief-

KIBUM

And the missing link is found. I'm happy we solved it together.

SOMIN

Huh?

A photo is slapped in front of her.

She looks up at Kibum, who nods to the photo. She picks it up: the band-aid.

SOMIN (CONT'D)

What-

KIBUM
It's your friend's.

She raises her eyebrows.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
I may have stolen it from the
bowling alley. Sent it off for a
DNA test in the States since I
figured blood types wouldn't be
enough for you.

SOMIN
What?

KIBUM
There was blood at the sauna. Under
the nails and on his feet.

SOMIN
The bandages...

Kibum nods.

KIBUM
And, of course, what you pointed
out: the two types found at the
noraebang. Results should come back
any minute now. That, and there's
also a pub owner who had loads to
say about our two lovebirds on
their post-murder date. Apparently
killing makes one very hungry.

Her expression says everything: he's got it.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
Believable evidence. That's what
you said, isn't it?

She stares at it, growing more and more anxious.

Somin gets up and walks over to him.

Her hands smooth over his arms as he looks at her, waiting.

She grasps his hands in hers and squeezes.

SOMIN
Kibum...

KIBUM
Not the result we hoped for, but a
case is a case.
(MORE)

KIBUM (CONT'D)

(empty)

Murder is murder.

A pleading look from Somin, powerless.

She pulls back and bows.

SOMIN

Chief.

KIBUM

Somin-

SOMIN

I have to make the coffee. Excuse me.

He watches her leave. He spots her notebook and rummages through the trash, pulling out the torn paper. He smooths it out and lets out a small chuckle.

KIBUM

Right in our faces...

He eyes the door to the dark room.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG POLICE STATION, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

SOMIN quickens her pace as she passes by officers and detectives, bowing in greeting. She finds YUL walking towards the squad room and grabs his arm.

YUL

Officer Kim?

SOMIN

Help me with the coffee, please.

She drags him inside the kitchenette.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG POLICE STATION, KITCHENETTE - CONTINUOUS

SOMIN takes out several small cups and opens the can of coffee.

YUL heads over to the kettle, filling it with water and putting it on the small stove. He's clearly tense.

SOMIN
Answer something for me, please.

YUL
Okay...

She adds coffee to the cups, then sugar. Her hands shake.

SOMIN
I... can't even begin to understand
what you two have. I tried, but
it's beyond me.

A moment. He takes hold of her hand, tries to stop it
shaking.

YUL
Officer Kim-

SOMIN
But I don't have to. It has nothing
to do with me. And I've had enough
time to realise that... he's more
important to me than... everything
else.

(beat)
But I need to hear it from you.
That you really- If he really is
loved.

She looks at him, searching his eyes.

YUL
More than anything.

Somin nods.

SOMIN
Then that's enough for me.

She rummages through her pocket, and takes out her keys. She
takes one off the chain, lifts Yul's hand up and places the
key in it, then closes his fist.

YUL
What's this?

SOMIN
Hyung will know.

As detectives come into the kitchen, she moves to the stove
and watches as the water boils.

SOMIN (CONT'D)
(softly)
Kibum found proof.

Yul pales.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG, STREET - NIGHT

SEO JOON climbs the endless row of stairs up to Yul's apartment, carrying a black take-out bag.

He finally makes it to the rooftop, slightly out of breath.

CUT TO:

INT. YUL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

SEO JOON enters, looking around. It's empty, no lights on.

SEO JOON
Yul?

No answer.

He begins to search the apartment.

He turns it over, but Yul's nowhere to be seen.

THUMP!

Seo Joon stops.

THUMP!

Seo Joon focuses on the apartment below, listening carefully.

THUMP!

He rushes out.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BELOW - CONTINUOUS

SEO JOON runs inside, freezing at the scene.

A young man, head bleeding, lying lifeless on the floor. An older man, also on the floor, passed out. YUL towering over them, nervously pacing around.

SEO JOON
What are you doing?

YUL
I needed to think- they were so
loud, I couldn't- I'm so sorry, I
didn't-

Seo Joon approaches slowly.

He reaches out carefully, drawing Yul into an embrace.

SEO JOON
It's okay.

A beat.

YUL
You need to go.

Yul reluctantly pulls away, Seo Joon clinging to his hand,
questioning.

YUL (CONT'D)
Kibum knows. He's coming for us.

SEO JOON
No.

Yul looks around the room, drawing his hand away.

YUL
There's no time this time.

He hands Seo Joon Somin's key.

SEO JOON
What-

YUL
Your friend said you'd know. Take
it and go.

Seo Joon grabs him again.

SEO JOON
I'm not leaving.

YUL
Seo Joon-

He hugs Yul tighter, face buried in his neck. Yul fights back
tears.

SEO JOON
I'd rather die.

Beat.

Gently, Yul pulls away.

They look at each other, desperately clinging to each other.

They exchange a look.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

CUT TO:

INT. ROOFTOP APARTMENT - NIGHT

SEO JOON splashes gasoline over and around the bed as YUL sets up the camera.

Yul removes the key around his neck and hangs it off the camera.

They exchange a look before they take their place on the mattress, forehead to forehead, a matchbox held tightly in YUL's hand.

YUL
Last chance.

Seo Joon smiles as he kisses him.

The timer goes off on the camera.

Darkness, the sound of a match lighting.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG POLICE STATION, HOMICIDE SQUAD ROOM - NIGHT

KIBUM stares at a picture of two embracing bodies, burned to a crisp.

A grim SOMIN walks in.

SOMIN
Chief.

He looks up as she hands him a cup of coffee and a folder.

SOMIN (CONT'D)
The film they managed to salvage.
They developed what they could.

He opens the folder to reveal a photo of Seo Joon and Yul moments before their death, positioned the same as the burned bodies.

She hands him another file.

SOMIN (CONT'D)
Blood test results.

Kibum opens it. The blood types match.

KIBUM
I guess that's it then.

SOMIN
Yes, sir.

She bows and takes her leave, but Kibum grabs her hand.

KIBUM
One of them had a fractured skull.

She doesn't take her eyes off the floor.

KIBUM (CONT'D)
Fire doesn't do that to a body.
Does it?

He pulls on her hand, forcing her to look at him. She squeezes it, silently pleading.

SOMIN
I'm done speculating. Just let it
be...

KIBUM
Right.
(beat)
Are you okay?

She takes a deep breath, keeping her head low.

SOMIN
Yes. Are you?

KIBUM
I've... been better.

A moment.

Somin pulls her hand out and ducks into the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG POLICE STATION, LADIES BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

SOMIN walks to the sink, leaning against it and letting out a deep sigh.

She calms herself down and looks around. She takes out a different blood test result.

No match.

She takes out a box of matches and lights the paper on fire, watching it burn as she tries to stifle her sobs.

CUT TO:

INT. ANYANG POLICE STATION, HOMICIDE SQUAD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kibum sits back down, pulling open a drawer. He takes out Yul's key, toying with it for a moment before picking up his photo album. He looks through it.

Yul's mother. Yul's friends. Yul's gifts for his love.

Hidden in the back cover, a corner of a picture sticks out. Kibum pulls it out.

The same picture he had in his wallet - the team dinner.
Kibum and Yul.

He lets out a weak chuckle.

Kibum adds the picture of the burned bodies on a blank page.

Yul and his love.

CUT TO:

EXT. JANGSAN MOUNTAIN, BUSAN - NIGHT

A couple of HIKERS make their way up the mountain, huddled together.

The taller one stops by the edge and leans down. From the fine coat of snow, he plucks out a snowdrop. A mackerel keyring sticks out of his pocket.

He jogs back to his place next to the other hiker, handing the flower over.

They keep walking.

THE END

