

Yoo Mia/Lost Child(*) Side Story

【Is he really here?】

【It's possible.】

Yoo Joonghyuk's day started like this.

After making strong coffee and cutting a few slices of black bread he bought yesterday, he grilled a piece of chicken breast that had been marinated in baking soda. Eggs were being fried in a small pan. It was important that the yolk remained intact and that the fried egg retained its original shape.

Yoo Joonghyuk only fried the egg whites for a moment then gently lifted the pan to place the eggs and cooked chicken breast on a plate. He added red amaranth and washed lettuce, and finally poured the tomato juice that Yoo Miah would drink into a cup.

"Yes!"

When he picked up the plate and looked back, he saw Yoo Miah climbing on the chair next to the dining table as if he were jumping horses, her eyes sparkling.

Yoo Joonghyuk used to place two plates and two cups in the usual position.

Looking back and forth at the food on the plate, Yoo Miah pouted.

"*Veggie.*"

"Yes, it's vegetables."

"*Veggie doesn't taste good.*"

"This vegetable is delicious."

"*But hum, I'll eat some sausage.*"

"There are also eggs."

"Yes."

"Chicken breast too."

"Boring."

"Eat it."

Yoo Joonghyuk furrowed his dark eyebrows and said to Yoo Miah.

"What you eat represents who you are."

Yoo Miah looked viciously at her tiny fist and then at the egg on the plate. The girl seemed to be muttering something like 'I don't want to eat'. Yoo Joonghyuk looked at Yoo Miah for a moment. He chewed and swallowed a piece of fried egg and opened his cell phone.

— Sliding downhill without braking. Does Team Ash's reputation end here?

— 'The fall of the Ash Dynasty is approaching.'

— Ash faces the risk of losing his ticket to the play-off round after consecutive defeats.

— Losing 2:3 to Viking, Ash's ability to stop before the play-offs is right in front of his eyes.

— Rumors of discord within Ash's team...

Looking at the articles that appeared like mushrooms after the rain on the portal homepage, darkness briefly appeared in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes.

Team Ash.

That was the team he won the championship with for the first time, and is currently one of the top Esport teams in Korea.

But recently his team has been in decline.

Yoo Joonghyuk read the comments under the article.

— Ash lost again?

— Turn off the speaker.

— The front of the neck is so hot :))) Honestly, it wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk's fault that we lost this match?

— (Comment has been hidden due to report)

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the last comment for a long time. Although he couldn't see the content, he could guess a part through the comments below.

— But Yoo Joonghyuk is truly an orphan, so it probably won't hurt him at all, right?

Orphan.

Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at that word with expressionless eyes. Such words cannot really attack him. On the contrary, it was the words that didn't appear that bothered him.

— (Comment has been hidden due to report)

How long has he been staring at the screen? His face reflected on the screen was turned off. Suddenly, the muscles on his right arm suddenly contracted. Lately this has been happening often. Even when he's eating, typing on the keyboard, or controlling the mouse. Maybe it's due to lack of nutrients.

"Obaboni."

She can't pronounce 'oppa' or 'oraboni' correctly yet [1] . Thinking back, Yoo Joonghyuk had never taught her the word 'oraboni' so he was suddenly curious to know where she learned that word.

Yoo Miah just pointed her fork at the plate in front of Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Please."

".....?"

"Please rest."

Yoo Joonghyuk sat guessing the meaning of that sentence for a while, then he skewered the egg Yoo Miah had saved and ate it all in front of her.

"Ugh! Mia's snack!"

Yoo Miah puffed her cheeks.

Looking at the girl's identical eyes, Yoo Joonghyuk realized that a new day had begun again.

"Joonghyuk, are you still eating well?"

A car was moving to the team's practice room.

Manager Kang Woohyun looked worried and glanced at Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Your face looks so thin and lifeless. You have to eat well to play well."

"I still eat well."

"Just lettuce and chicken breast, right? What diet is that? Let's eat cooked rice. Beef too."

Yoo Joonghyuk did not respond. But he felt a bit strange. Why do people keep asking him what he ate?

"If you eat and drink enough, you're lucky."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know if Kang Woohyun really felt lucky or if he was just talking about it. He don't know since when, but he always found it difficult to understand people's inner feelings.

— Player Yoo Joonghyuk, how do you feel today?

The reporters at the gym always asked him the same questions.

How do you feel today, how do you evaluate your opponent, do you have any strategy, what score do you think you will win by and what are your thoughts on the recent controversies?

Sometimes Yoo Joonghyuk will answer frankly, sometimes he won't say a word. But no matter what he said, the article always had a headline that had nothing to do with his opinion.

If so, why do they ask questions? Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't find the answer, but at least he understood one thing.

That's their job.

"Have you been reading the comments lately?"

As soon as he raised his head, he caught Kang Woohyun's worried eyes through the rearview mirror.

"I told you not to read anymore. They're all jealous of you. That's why they do this. There's no need to read such words and then become even more upset."

Maybe when he saw him staring at the phone, he thought it was like that. Actually, that wasn't a misunderstanding. In fact, there was a line of comments from someone showing on his phone screen.

— I heard that Yoo Joonghyuk has a very rude personality in real life.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at that comment. Contrary to Kang Woohyun's words, Yoo Joonghyuk did not feel very upset.

— Wasn't it Yoo Joonghyuk who made the atmosphere in the team all messed up? Everyone in the world knows it.

If someone has a grudge against him, he just needs to be prepared to face that hatred. Then everything is under his control.

— What do you guys know?

But...

— What do you guys know to say that? How do you know that Uncle Yoo Joonghyuk is that kind of person?

Usually, only the same people commented often. But this was the first time he saw the nickname writing this comment.

Demon King's Daughter (siny****)

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at that short comment for a long moment, as if considering an opponent he had encountered for the first time in his life.

“Joonghyuk, we're here.”

From afar, he could clearly see the flashy exterior of the building where the team's practice room was located.

Yoo Joonghyuk nonchalantly turned his eyes back to his phone. He tried to find the comment he just read but couldn't find it.

Has it been deleted? Or did he see wrong?

“According to my schedule, you're busy until late at night. Let me take care of Miah, okay?”

“So thanks to you.”

“Is Miah still slurring her words? Do I need to take her to the doctor? My parents...”

Kang Woohyun, who had been chattering up until now, seemed to suddenly realize that he had made some mistake. He awkwardly closed his mouth and laughed.

“Let's go. Don't worry about Miah.”

“Thank you.”

“Ah, recently a few new managers arrived. If you meet, say hello enthusiastically. She seems to be your fan.”

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded slightly and looked at Kang Woohyun for a moment before getting out of the car.

“What's up? Do you need anything?”

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment whether to ask Kang Woohyun if he had breakfast or not, but then he shook his head and went to the practice room as usual.

['■■■' has changed her username to 'Daughter of the Demon King'.]

['The Demon King's daughter' says there's a new feature here.]

['■■■' has changed its username to 'Flying Golden Poison'.]

['The Demon King's daughter' says that it's a bit creepy.]

Yoo Joonghyuk went upstairs, crossed the hallway and went straight to his personal practice room.

This room was designed specifically for Yoo Joonghyuk. It is about 16~20 square meters wide, equipped with the most modern computer system and tables and chairs for gamers. Many types of sports drinks as well as nutritional supplements are arranged in separate categories. At first glance, it looked like an ordinary gamer's room.

Except that all four sides of this room were made of glass.

— Please be mindful of others.

This room was a kind of punishment that the supervisor gave to Yoo Joonghyuk, who rarely listened to his advice.

Anyone passing by could freely observe him in the practice room like looking at a monkey in a zoo. And Yoo Joonghyuk could see them too.

— Player Yoo Joonghyuk had an excellent performance but had almost no cooperative spirit. He needs to be trained to accept the gaze of others.

— Right from the moment they go on air, professional gamers always have to receive the media's judgmental eyes. The room will help him practice getting used to the feeling of tension that awaits every second.

That sounded like dehumanising nonsense, but the sponsors accepted the supervisor's proposal. They even often go to the gym to watch Yoo Joonghyuk practice alone on the other side of the glass window.

But Yoo Joonghyuk didn't care. He was used to being the center of attention. Besides, he also liked the fact that he didn't have to cause unnecessary arguments with his team members. Because except for the supervisor and manager Kang Woohyun, the only person who can talk to Yoo Joonghyuk in the gym was coach Park Jinsang.

“Joonghyuk, let's start.”

Park Jinsang tapped his glasses to signal and Yoo Joonghyuk nodded. He relaxed his arms and shoulders with simple stretching movements, took a deep breath and then put on his headphones. Sound came from the headphones and the game logo appeared on the screen.

Yoo Joonghyuk's main game genre was RTS (Real-time strategy).

A game where after controlling buildings and judging enemy strategies in real time, players must collect resources, create units to wage war. Its appeal was that players must combine appropriate units to attack, or occasionally organize surprise raids on the enemy's weak points at the appropriate time.

— Bang bang bang bang.

Gunfire echoed from the headphones. The screen changed so quickly that the human eye could keep up.

Yoo Joonghyuk was the commander on the battlefield. Every unit was under his control. In his mind, he was calculating, at this moment, what the profits and losses of this battle, the next battle, and the next battle were.

Whatever needed to be given up, definitely give it up. You must definitely get the necessary points to win.

The units he created gradually died, someone cried out in pain. The monsters on the opposing side roared. The sound of the ground collapsing, the sound of structures exploding, and the sound of objects breaking into pieces.

Finally, when the fire and bullets ended, Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the sky from among the ruins of the battlefield.

[VICTORY.]

Looking at the victory symbol appearing, he did not have any emotions as if it were obvious.

To him, that battlefield was just a thing that repeated every day. Not sad, not happy, not angry. There is only killing, death, destruction, loss.

And victory.

Right after that, his practice opponent changed. His mood was not bad now. Biceps also did not cramp. Seeing the opponent fighting, Yoo Joonghyuk immediately took the initiative in the match. He did not waste any openings, did not hold back, and let the match end quickly.

[VICTORY.]

After each match, he took a short break of less than 5 minutes and then went straight to the next match. He must remind himself of the mistakes he made in the previous match and improve his weaknesses.

And then win and win again.

Yoo Joonghyuk continued to play as if he were baking bread and frying eggs. At that moment, a voice he had never heard before reached his ears.

“... But how can you watch it? How is it possible... in a room like that...”

He looked around and vaguely saw the door to the room ajar. On the other side of the door, there were two people arguing. One person is coach Park Jinsang.

And the other person... who is it?

— Bang bang bang bang!

Yoo Joonghyuk hurriedly reviewed the war situation.

That's a mistake. The special forces unit that was fighting closely was destroyed in a moment of carelessness, and the battle situation immediately turned in favor of the enemy.

—?? =)))

His practice opponent joked in the chat box.

The coach sounded a warning.

Yoo Joonghyuk calmly tried to fix his mistake, but the loss in the previous match was too great. Even if you increase your stamina to the maximum level, you will still be overloaded. Yoo Joonghyuk tried to simulate a few times the local battles that were about to take place, and finally concluded that there was no chance of winning anymore, so he ended the match.

[SURRENDER.]

Looking at the losing side's screen, Yoo Joonghyuk sighed softly. When he took off his headphones, the noise from outside became even louder.

“As a supervisor, can't I do as I please? Anyway, we can't leave people here like that.”

When he left his seat and went out, he saw Park Jinsang in trouble with a short-haired girl who was making a fuss in front of him.

“Ah, hello!”

When the girl turned her head, her brown hair moved slightly. The first time he saw that face.

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded slightly and looked at the girl's name tag.

New manager Y.S.

It seems that this girl is the new employee that Kang Woohyun mentioned.

“Ah yes... are you okay?”

Hearing the new employee ask such a question without beginning or end, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know how to answer.

“Hey, I'm sorry, Joonghyuk. She just arrived so she's still not sure how to get here—.”

Park Jinsang quickly interjected and babbled a lot.

Yoo Joonghyuk heard that and looked at the new girl's face again. At a glance, it looked like the face of a teenage girl. That girl had clear eyes and white skin.

Usually, when meeting Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes, everyone's reaction was the same. If you don't open your eyes in surprise, just turn away and avoid it.

But this new employee did not turn away nor waver at all. On the contrary, that face was calm as if his presence here was obvious.

“Oh, right. Are you hungry?”

The new employee gave Yoo Joonghyuk a small paper bag. Yoo Joonghyuk silently lowered his eyes to look at the paper bag. The girl paid no attention to that cold attitude and continued speaking.

“It's dumplings. You like this dish, right?”

Dumplings?

Yoo Joonghyuk raised his eyebrows.

“I don't.”

“What's the matter...”

The new employee pouted and invited him again.

“Well, you should try it, it's delicious—”

“Hey, Joonghyuk eats almost nothing but lettuce and chicken breast. He only eats what he cooks himself. Joonghyuk, finish training and go eat. As for the new girl, stop talking nonsense, go over there and take care of the other kids!”

Park Jinsang pressed Yoo Joonghyuk's back to urge him. Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at the new employee's gloomy face and then walked to the employee cafeteria.

Lunch time is 50 minutes. That is too limited a period of time to absorb enough calories needed for the body and brain to recover and then practice a few simple stretching exercises.

When he got to the restaurant, instead of waiting in line to get food, he took a lunch box and brought it with him in the morning.

Park Jinsang forced a smile, looked at Yoo Joonghyuk and said.

"I'll go get some food first."

While Park Jinsang was holding his tray to line up, a few other players passed by Yoo Joonghyuk's table. Looking at their faces, it turned out that they were the players who had just practiced with him before. Some of them glared at Yoo Joonghyuk viciously and whispered to each other. It was a normal thing so Yoo Joonghyuk didn't pay any attention and continued to eat lunch.

Actually, there is a reason why Yoo Joonghyuk insisted on bringing a boxed lunch.

In the final match of last season, Yoo Joonghyuk suffered food poisoning after eating food prepared by the management team. The management side pointed out that only Yoo Joonghyuk was poisoned and affirmed that they were not responsible, but even if he racked his brain, Yoo Joonghyuk could not remember what he ate other than food that day.

Since then, Yoo Joonghyuk always brought his own lunch.

"Enjoy your food."

He suddenly raised his head and saw the new employee from earlier sitting across from him. The girl was eating the dumpling she was about to offer him earlier. Yoo Joonghyuk replied gruffly.

"Eat to live, not live to enjoy food."

"But if you eat delicious food, life will be more beautiful."

After saying that, the new employee opened her mouth wide and took a big bite of the dumpling. Just looking at it now, he didn't pay attention, but if you look closely, you'll see that the dumpling's crust has moderate elasticity and the filling inside is extremely plump. But to be able to package like that, the skills are not ordinary.

"Did you do it yourself?"

"As expected... Shall we split it in half?"

"No, I do not like it."

"Try a bite, maybe you'll like it."

"You don't need to try to know."

"But uncle..."

Yoo Joonghyuk was silent for a moment before answering.

"Don't call me uncle."

"What do you want to be called?"

Yoo Joonghyuk had never received such a question before. Anyone who wanted to call him should think about how to address him. The way they address Yoo Joonghyuk can also determine his attitude towards the other person. However, the new employee in front of Yoo Joonghyuk told him to decide how to address himself.

"Call me player Yoo Joonghyuk."

"Player Yoo Joonghyuk....."

The new employee muttered in a low voice, then suddenly pulled out her notebook and began jotting something down.

"What?"

"It's nothing."

"What did you write?"

"It's just, I think a lot of people will like to hear this story... But if I forget it, I can't tell it again."

The new employee scribbled in the notebook, making crunching sounds. Looking at the not-so-readable words filling the white page, Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly thought of methods to remember something.

If he also wrote a diary, would he be able to remember the past?

Suddenly his biceps twitched, and his mind was filled with buzzing noises. He felt choked, as if water was pouring into his ears.

Immediately after that, he saw white walls surrounding him. High, solid walls that he could not break or overcome with his own strength. The sound of a pen writing echoed from the other side of the wall.

Rustle.

Someone is writing something on the wall. But he couldn't read a word. They are like hidden comments, even though they are still there, he can never read them.

"Player Yoo Joonghyuk?"

When he regained consciousness, the new employee was looking at him worriedly.

"Are you okay?"

"No problem."

"Are you sure you're feeling alright?"

Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at the new employee's handbook and then looked at her sad face. To Yoo Joonghyuk, people's inner thoughts are as difficult to understand as the words written on the other side of the wall. But that expression even Yoo Joonghyuk could understand.

The new employee is worried about him.

Yoo Joonghyuk answered decisively.

"Don't worry about it."

After speaking, Yoo Joonghyuk felt a bit regretful. Obviously the question just now had good intentions. At least he shouldn't have answered this way.

But the new employee's face remained as calm as ever. It was as if Yoo Joonghyuk answering like that was a natural thing or like she was so used to it.

Suddenly someone patted Yoo Joonghyuk on the shoulder and sat down next to him.

"Oh, are you talking to the new employee?"

It's Park Jinsang. The rice on the tray was half empty, he was probably in the middle of talking to the other players when he moved to this place.

Park Jinsang looked away from Yoo Joonghyuk and then turned to look at the new employee as if he had encountered something strange and then joked.

"Being assaulted by Joonghyuk on the first day of work? Shall I fire him?"

The new employee pretended not to hear, opened her mouth and took a bite of the dumpling. Seeing the girl like that, Park Jinsang clicked his tongue.

"The kids are really cool these days. Hey Joonghyuk, just now the supervisor watched the morning practice session and left a comment."

Thinking back, he had forgotten about the comment in the morning. The supervisor said that he had a schedule today so he had to leave early.

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded and Park Jinsang spoke.

"He didn't have time so he couldn't watch the final match. The response is still the same as usual. Perfect control. The strategy of building and combining is very appropriate, absorbing previous comments well. But-"

Except for his unpleasant personality, the supervisor was a person with quite accurate eyes. Even Yoo Joonghyuk had to admit that. In fact, there was no need for him to admit it, he was already a supervisor recognized by the whole world. Every Tet holiday, the legendary stars in the Esport community who were trained by him always send gifts.

"The gameplay is a bit predictable. The setup and construction are exactly like in the textbook, the variation is weak. And above all..."

He had heard comments like that forever. Fast speed, precise countermeasures. But it's not that the flexibility is poor, it's also that it doesn't deviate much from the pre-planned direction. The ending sentence was always the same.

"There's no soul in playing."

There's no soul. Every time he heard that comment, Yoo Joonghyuk wondered, can that problem be solved?

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't believe in souls. He felt strange talking about something he had never seen before. In his mind, humans were creatures that eat when they are hungry, and when they are sleepy they sleep. The more you eat, the more energy you create to move, think, and survive. That's all Yoo Joonghyuk knew about people.

To him, the supervisor's words 'no soul' were more like a self-composed poem that he couldn't understand than a piece of advice.

"Are you playing without a soul? What does that mean?"

The new employee asked a question. Park Jinsang answered awkwardly.

"Um, it's just a figurative expression. It means we don't feel his passionate determination or perseverance. If this guy doesn't find any chance to reverse the situation, he will give up immediately."

In fact, supervisors were not the only ones who made such assessments. Yoo Joonghyuk always judged the results of wins and losses so quickly that many fans called him 'AI'.

But the new employee's expression after hearing the above explanation was strange. Park Jinsang pursed his lips and asked.

"Why are you smiling? Is what I said funny?"

"A little?"

"What?"

"No, it's nothing."

Park Jinsang glared at the new employee for a moment and then looked back at Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Anyway, there's no need to listen to him so closely. How much does the supervisor understand about you? He just wants to torture you, Joonghyuk. It was that guy who put you in that room."

After that, coach Park Jinsang began cursing at the supervisor for a long time. Why are foreigners allowed to work as Esports supervisors in Korea? Frankly, isn't it the coach who does that?

This backbiting continued until the plate of food was empty. The new employee also stood up and shook her head in frustration. When the players sitting around also left one by one, the coach lowered his voice to a whisper, different from before.

"Kids these days don't know what fear is."

Park Jinsang stared at the new employee's neck, his eyes gradually becoming cold. Suddenly, he spoke darkly as if wearing a different mask.

"If she knew what you and I have been through, she would probably faint."

Looking at Park Jinsang's cold dark eyes, Yoo Joonghyuk realized that he was now getting into the main story.

"Meet me in the monitoring room."

【..... I told you. Can you believe it?】

【Also..... cute.】

【..... You really.....】

(*) T/N: Originally 미아 – Miah, also Yoo Joonghyuk's sister's name. However, these two words are just homonyms with different meanings. This may be a play on words by the

author. Based on the content of this side story, the translator believes that the word Miah here refers to a lost child rather than to little girl Yoo Miah. ↑

[1] Oppa/oraboni: These are both ways of addressing women when talking to men older than them. Oppa is used a lot in modern Korean. Oraboni is a more formal aka honorific than the word oppa, but is rarely used today.

After the afternoon schedule ended, Yoo Joonghyuk went to the surveillance room. Park Jinsang leaned back in the supervisor's chair, placing his feet on the table arrogantly.

"You know what? This is my place."

But at the last minute, a sponsor inserted Ash's team supervisor. In fact, for Park Jinsang, it's unfair. Because Park Jinsang played an important role in gathering key members of Ash's team and taking the team to major tournaments.

"Can you believe it? This is what we have achieved in the last three years."

Park Jinsang chuckled and pointed to the team's trophies placed in the exhibition room.

Looking at the series of trophies, Yoo Joonghyuk also briefly remembered the past. This is a testament to the journey the Ash team has gone through since the team's founding until now. At the end of that road is the name of Yoo Joonghyuk himself.

Total record: 64 wins, 5 losses and 1 draw.

MVP OVERLORD Yoo Joonghyuk

Two years ago, along with the team championship, he received this plaque.

That year, Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly became a star in the Esports world.

"Joonghyuk, don't talk about this out there because the kids might notice."

Park Jinsang sighed softly, took a cigarette out of his chest and put it in his mouth. Acrid smoke filled the room, the ventilation fan installed on the ceiling made a loud noise and rotated blindly.

"Do it well."

Park Jinsang exhaled a puff of smoke, turning into a completely different person from the image everyone saw at lunchtime. The gentle, smiling eyes had disappeared, leaving only a face covered in cold darkness.

"Do you know how chaotic you've been lately? How did you. . . . We've gotten so far, have you forgotten everything?"

One move and he grabbed the other man's shoulder. In fact, this is the true face of Park Jinsang that Yoo Joonghyuk always remembered.

Coach Park Jinsang.

He was not originally from the Esports world. 'Shark in the world', a phrase referring to someone who specializes in looting virtual money in games by exploiting illegal workers from abroad in illegally built buildings to operate illegal websites or private casinos. There was a time in the world of Dark Gamers [1] , no one knew where Park Jinsang worked.

"Do you want to go back to that time? Or do you want to eat instant noodles and play money-making games in that semi-basement house again?"

As he thought about Park Jinsang's past, memories of his teenage years that he had completely forgotten appeared in his mind one after another. Since then, Yoo Joonghyuk's life has been closely linked to this man.

"Who discovered you? It's me. It was I who nominated and brought you here. But if you keep acting like that, what will happen to the person who leads you like me?"

Park Jinsang is a bad guy. This guy was also the first to recognize Yoo Joonghyuk's gaming talent and brought him out of that prison-like camp.

"I will try."

"Try? I know. I know our Joonghyuk always tries to work. But let's try in a few other aspects as well. A little more relaxed facial expression, even speaking style... isn't that okay? Otherwise, even if you have that face, we won't be able to film any commercials."

Park Jinsang sighed and then stubbed out his cigarette.

"Anyway, that's that, I called you today because of something else. Tomorrow is the last match before the play-offs, right?"

Instead of continuing to speak, Park Jinsang frowned and tapped his fingers on the table.

Yoo Joonghyuk remembered Park Jinsang's habits. The first day he met him at Director Kim's camp, Park Jinsang looked at Yoo Joonghyuk and frowned for a long time. The very next day, he took Yoo Joonghyuk away from Director Kim's camp.

And on the first day he brought Yoo Joonghyuk here, Park Jinsang said.

— From now on, you must absolutely not lose a single match.

And now, with the same expression, Park Jinsang spoke again.

"Just lose one game."

Lose.

"I'm not telling you to quit fighting, it's like... You know. It was like you tried your best, but unfortunately it ended like that. Understand?"

Yoo Joonghyuk tried not to think about the implications of those statements and responded instinctively.

"I remember I turned down this offer last time."

"So now I'm in a whole bunch of trouble. Just one match, nothing more, nothing less. Have you seen the match list for tomorrow? I also made an agreement with the others."

"I have never signed a losing contract."

"Contract? I just want to ask you a favor, but there's a contract..."

Yoo Joonghyuk quickly glanced at the door of the supervisory office and observed Park Jinsang's face. The atmosphere became increasingly unusual. Actually, Yoo Joonghyuk knew exactly what Park Jinsang was talking about.

The reason why Ash's team's performance has slipped so badly recently.

It wasn't just because Yoo Joonghyuk's condition was deteriorating or because of the supervisor's incompetence. The main reason was because Park Jinsang was sitting right in front of him.

Park Jinsang took out a new cigarette. That cigarette was completely different from the one he smoked just now. As soon as he finished lighting the fire, Park Jinsang continued.

"Make no mistake, Joonghyuk."

Park Jinsang.

Coach of Team Ash.

Brokers sell match scores and manipulate behind the scenes of the esports industry.

Park Jinsang did not bring Yoo Joonghyuk here to exploit his talent and win.

"You alone get 700 million. Do you know how big that money is?"

He knew. 700 million was his salary for two years..... More precisely, it was more than the amount of money that Park Jinsang pocketed in the past two years.

“Think carefully. The market is not very good these days. Everyone is switching to AOS so the tournament is gradually closing. You and I can't end like this. You have to be responsible for your family, and you should also think about Miah.”

If his account alone was 700 million won, the amount of money poured in would be much larger.

Maybe Park Jinsang will receive at least 2 billion won in commission.

Including the foreign market share, tens of billions of won may have been poured in.

Looking at the wrinkles on Park Jinsang's forehead, Yoo Joonghyuk pondered the numbers for a moment.

What could 700 million do?

Instead of the old accommodation provided by the management company, he would be able to find a house for rent on the outskirts of Seoul. Maybe send his sister to a daycare closer to home and buy her new clothes. Maybe take her to the hospital more often.

And who knows, even though he doesn't know how much the detective agency's commission fee is—

Maybe he can find his parents.

But.

“I got food poisoning in the deciding match last season.”

A low, chilling voice. Park Jinsang knew what state Yoo Joonghyuk was in when speaking in this tone, so he just nodded instead of criticizing his way of speaking.

“Was it also because you were playing tricks at that time?”

The day before the match, Park Jinsang asked Yoo Joonghyuk to bet. Yoo Joonghyuk refused and the next day he had a severe stomach ache so he couldn't play as usual. He lost the decisive match, and the whole team lost too.

Park Jinsang didn't say a word, just took a drag of his cigarette.

“I should have answered no.”

Park Jinsang sighed softly and said.

“Can't you just think like a normal person? It was a very difficult match, and in that situation there was no way to win. You often give up easily.”

“I have never given up easily. I always do my best.”

Park Jinsang glared at Yoo Joonghyuk as if he didn't know anything. He looked at Yoo Joonghyuk's face, the old jacket, and the lunch box in his hand. After that, he angrily flicked his cigarette butt down and said.

“Joonghyuk, if a dog eats human food, will it become human?”

Yoo Joonghyuk remembered the scene of the camp in the dark semi-basement.

There, he played games with other people's accounts, climbing the rankings to earn a living. Park Jinsang makes money by getting upgrades for others and Yoo Joonghyuk lives off that money.

But now he couldn't live like that. He was no longer alone. He wanted to make money in a legitimate way no matter how little the amount was.

But it seemed Park Jinsang didn't think so.

“I already mentioned this, so why are you doing this? Are you that distrustful of people? So you despise me, don't you?”

Park Jinsang lit a cigarette and stood up, his eyes very fierce. Right after that, Yoo Joonghyuk's cold eyes looked straight at Park Jinsang.

Like ferocious beasts that refused to retreat even a single step in its territory, the two stared at each other for a long time. Time passed like that without knowing how long it took. And then it was Park Jinsang who was the first to break the tense atmosphere that seemed like it could explode at any moment.

"I know. I know."

His pale smiling face suddenly changed into the expression of 'coach Park Jinsang'. He waved his hand in frustration and said.

“I know, go away.”

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at Park Jinsang for a moment then turned and left the room.

After Yoo Joonghyuk left, Park Jinsang continued to smoke. When the ashtray looked like a hedgehog, he stood up and gave a wry smile.

He immediately turned on his phone and called someone.

“Hey, you look really handsome.”

The taxi driver kept talking all the way home. This often happens every time he takes a taxi.

"I used to also—"

Even though Yoo Joonghyuk didn't respond, he continued to gossip. He let the driver talk as he pleased.

"You don't know, being handsome is tiring."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at his face reflected in the glass window.

Perhaps that is the only legacy his parents left him. In any case, this appearance has helped him make ends meet.

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't understand how people could like or dislike someone when they just saw that person's face. But Yoo Joonghyuk did know that if someone complimented his appearance, he should also express his gratitude to them.

"Thanks."

He left a short sentence and got out of the taxi. Rain fell intermittently in the overcast sky.

He entered the password and went into the house. The living room lights are off. Yoo Joonghyuk paused for a moment then opened his mouth.

"Yoo Miah."

But there was no answer. Under the dim light of the sensor light, Yoo Joonghyuk held up a long umbrella as a weapon.

"Woohyun?"

Still no answer. That means no one is in the house, or they're pretending there isn't. Has this situation ever happened before? Immediately, countless theories emerged. Yoo Joonghyuk decided to check for himself.

He hid in the darkness of the living room, trying his best not to make any noise. He perked his ears to listen, but all he heard was the steady noise of the refrigerator. There was no sign of any living thing.

Yoo Joonghyuk did not let down his guard, turned on the light to dispel the darkness and looked around the house. This is not a spacious apartment.

"If you hear me, answer me! Yoo Miah!"

It was late at night, the night road was deserted with not many people. A few students were secretly smoking in the corner of the alley, avoiding Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze. A few men lined up to drink alcohol at a roadside bar. An annoyed Yoo Joonghyuk grabbed a middle-aged man who was drunk and asked.

"Did... did you see..."

Yoo Joonghyuk was not used to starting conversations like this with strangers, so he took a deep breath and rearranged what he needed to say.

"A little girl. About 68 cm tall. Hair tied on both sides, often wearing blue clothes. The facial features look a lot like mine."

Not realizing that Yoo Joonghyuk's way of speaking was somewhat strange, the drunk man rolled his eyes and put his face down on the table. Yoo Joonghyuk looked at that drunkard for a moment, then grabbed the people around him and asked.

"Uh, baby girl? I did not see."

No one saw Yoo Miah. Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the reeds growing along the road. Next to this reed bed is a park overgrown with grass. If she went there, someone must have definitely seen it. Yoo Joonghyuk looked towards the end of the road filled with reeds. The silhouette of a large supermarket loomed in the distant darkness. Could she have walked there?

But can it walk?

Yoo Joonghyuk started running.

"Yoo Miah..... Yoo Miah!"

How long had he been running? Yoo Joonghyuk had been standing in front of the big supermarket without realizing it. The supermarket is closed. On the way here, he looked everywhere, not missing any corner. Convenience stores, fast food stores, stationery, playgrounds, alleys... he looked at them all. It felt as if a fog was covering his head.

He had never heard anyone mention this situation.

Yoo Joonghyuk has learned many things to raise his younger sister on his own. He reads books and searches for information online. He bought all the necessary items for child care.

What should be the attitude when raising children, how to not create bad habits for children. Educational methods foster correct values for children.

Some books he had read but still didn't understand, some books offered methods that even if he understood, he couldn't do them. There are books that teach him things he never received from his parents, and there are books that say he can never replace their position.

However, he did everything he could and lived until now.

But there was no book that told him how to handle this situation.

Just think of this as a game.

Yoo Joonghyuk muttered in his head.

This is a game. It's the only thing he's good at. The goal is to find Yoo Miah. Think simply. Don't panic, what can be done now.....

Think about it.

But the more he thought, the more confused his mind became.

In the game, if there is no way to win, he can give up. Even if you lose one match, there are still many more to come.

But if he loses this battle, he will lose something.

His heart started beating fast. Yoo Joonghyuk ran like crazy and shouted Yoo Miah's name. A chill slowly spread throughout his arms. He also felt that the odds of winning were decreasing over time. It felt like he was playing a game that was destined to fail with an opponent he didn't know.

A game he couldn't give up.

He suddenly realized that he could not act alone. He must ask someone for help. Thinking of this, he blamed himself for not reporting the crime immediately. But as soon as he opened his phone, Yoo Joonghyuk realized why he didn't go to report the case.

— If possible, it's best not to let outsiders know.

One day, Kang Woohyun told him that.

— If it is discovered that you are raising your younger sister alone, many problems will arise.

— What problems?

— There was also a problem with Jinsang. In general, something like that. I heard that when you picked her up, there was only a letter attached. Don't take her for a DNA test?

— Looking at her appearance, she is indeed my sister.

— But, who knows. If she really isn't your sister or her family situation is complicated...

—

— If so, where will this poor girl end up? I will help you as much as I can. So if possible, it's best not to let outsiders know.

Yoo Joonghyuk called the police. But why? The police didn't pick up the phone. He called the second time, too. It wasn't until the third time that the police received the call.

Yoo Joonghyuk reported that his sister was missing.

He said his name, his sister's name and age. And.....

— What are your parents' names? The girl's date of birth is...

“Date of birth is...”

Why? He can't remember. Yoo Joonghyuk tried to remember Yoo Miah's birth date.

—What is the address of the reporter?

“The address is...”

It felt like someone had skillfully erased his memories.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly turned around and looked back. The road he just ran through was engulfed in darkness. He often walks on that road, holding Yoo Miah's hand to go to the market and then return home. But why?

The way home suddenly became strange.

The police asked if they could come now. They said they needed to know some more personal information about his sister and how she disappeared.

But hearing that, Yoo Joonghyuk felt like they couldn't find his sister.

His sister has gone missing.

A child who looked exactly like him. A child whose face, name, age, and parents were unknown was left in front of his house as if he had fallen from the sky.

"I will call back later."

Yoo Joonghyuk hung up the phone and turned back the way he just came.

Who knows? Who knows, maybe she was standing in a nearby alley that he didn't see when he ran past. Who knows, maybe she wandered around alone and then returned to lurking in front of the house.

“Yoo Miah!”

He needed help from people around him, not the police.

Someone who knew him.

A person who would immediately go with him to find his sister who is wandering somewhere instead of asking him who he is or where he is.

Names of people he knew randomly appeared in his mind. The faces of Kang Woohyun, Park Jinsang, the supervisor who was not very close to him and even the names of the players he had met flashed through Yoo Joonghyuk's mind. For a moment, he suddenly remembered the face of the new female manager he met this morning.

The surrounding space shook, his breathing became heavier.

Yoo Joonghyuk groped in the dark, forcing himself to continue.

Is he here..... or is he there?

Looking into the pitch black darkness for a long time made him gradually lose his sense of reality.

The scene of the camp in the semi-basement was similar. Hundreds of unnumbered chairs are lined up in a spacious square camp. Director Kim said he could sit 'anywhere', and from that day on, Yoo Joonghyuk sat and played games 'anywhere'.

'Anywhere' is his seat.

“Yoo Miah!”

The faint smell of stray cats' urine.

Looking at the dark alley as deep as an abyss, Yoo Joonghyuk felt as if he had returned to that semi-underground camp.

Park Jinsang was right. There's no way he could become a different person just because he ate something else.

He leaned against the wall panting for a moment. It's not simply dizziness due to consuming too much physical strength. His eyes were chaotic as if he were on drugs, and his body felt heavy as if he had become a child.

Is it because of fatigue due to the recent busy work schedule? Or as Miah said, because he eats too many vegetables? Or did Park Jinsang secretly put something in the food?

Not likely. He didn't remember what he ate that Park Jinsang gave him. But if so, then when... He suddenly remembered that Park Jinsang had blown smoke at him while in the surveillance room.

Cigarette smoke.

Cigarette smoke and a choking cough covered his vision.

In just a blink of an eye, he was in a familiar scene. The smell of rotten food and unbathed sweat.

The sound of mouse clicking and keyboard typing echoed from everywhere.

It's a semi-underground camp run by Director Kim.

Only then did he regain a sense of reality. This is still his reality.

He still hasn't escaped this semi-underground house, not even one step.

Yoo Miah has disappeared.

He won't be able to see her again.

Yoo Joonghyuk sat down on a chair in the camp as if it was all a dream. And then, the chair next to him suddenly rotated and someone grabbed his shoulder.

"Uncle."

He looked next to him bewilderedly and saw a teenage boy with a tattoo on his arm sitting there. Looking closely at its face, he realized it was one of the kids smoking in the alley earlier.

"Hey uncle, we are calling you. Can't you hear it?"

"Uncle? He looks so bright and beautiful."

"I think I've seen you somewhere, right? Are you an artist?"

"Idiot. It's so dark that he looks beautiful."

The kids whispered to each other while surrounding Yoo Joonghyuk. The kid who seemed to be the leader of the group was the one who started talking to Yoo Joonghyuk. At first glance, he looked big and tall like Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Hey uncle, go to the convenience store in front and buy us a package like that. Please keep the leftover money."

The boy confidently held out the red cigarette pack and ten thousand won bill. Yoo Joonghyuk looked at it dumbfounded. Seeing that he wasn't holding money, he patted Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder.

"Hey uncle. Are you deaf?"

Yoo Joonghyuk smiled lightly.

“Are you laughing?”

The face of the boy who was raising his fist suddenly distorted. Even so, Yoo Joonghyuk still smiled. His sense of reality was completely shattered.

“(Comment has been hidden due to report.)”

The boy muttered something and raised his fist. However, no sound was heard at all.

“(Comment has been hidden due to report.)”

But Yoo Joonghyuk was no longer curious about those sentences.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly closed his eyes. He suddenly realized that nothing in this world could surprise him anymore. Even if the world were to be destroyed tomorrow, he would not be surprised.

No matter what happened right before his eyes—

At that moment, a rustling sound rang out, and a long silver needle suddenly appeared and stabbed into the boy's neck.

He looked at his neck incredulously, then collapsed in front of him.

Yoo Joonghyuk blinked blankly.

“(Comment has been hidden due to report.)”

The kids who were observing the situation behind them screamed loudly.

A few children then regained consciousness, looked around and screamed violently.

“(Comment has been hidden due to report!)”

“(Comment has been hidden due to report!)”

The rustling sound rang out again, the silver needle was inserted into the children's throats.

Suddenly. Then it flashed again.

“(Comment has been hidden due to report!)”

“(Comment has been hidden due to report!)”

In the end, all the kids collapsed before the needle, and the cigarette smoke surrounding Yoo Joonghyuk also disappeared.

The surrounding scene was gradually changing, and when he blinked again, Yoo Joonghyuk was standing at the beginning of the dead-end alley. He lightly vomited and then raised his head to see two dark shadows walking slowly under the streetlight at the intersection. What was surprising was that he heard their voices very clearly.

"It's all over."

"Oh my god, he's not dead. Just fainted. Do you know what fainting is?"

A familiar voice.

The street lights were so dazzling. He squinted his eyes and saw two dumplings, one big and one small, standing on the other side of the intersection. Perhaps because it was cold, steam was rising from the top of the dumpling.

The little dumpling said.

"The side has traffic lights. Running fast is dangerous."

"It's OK. I didn't know... pedestrians have priority. Just hold my hand and walk."

Her elegant and gentle voice was like the sound of snow falling into smooth, white piles. White steam fluttered under the dim light and Yoo Joonghyuk realized it was pure white hair.

The woman held the small dumpling's hand and approached Yoo Joonghyuk. The little dumpling finally recognized Yoo Joonghyuk, pointed at him and said.

"Obaboni."

Yoo Joonghyuk just closed his eyes.

【Is it okay to interfere to this extent? If uncle ■■ or sister ■■ finds out, then】

【Um... but those people will like it.】

[1] Dark Gamer: often used in fantasy game novels, refers to people who make a living by exchanging game money and goods into cash. ↑

Yoo Joonghyuk doesn't believe in miracles. Everything is the result of efforts, of the life that person has lived.

But there is no way to explain what happened to Yoo Joonghyuk that day other than to say it was a miracle.

Yoo Joonghyuk gasped and woke up to see Yoo Miah sleeping soundly next to him.

It was just a dream.

But if it was a dream, it was a very strange dream. What remained in his mind was the thick smoke and the attractive shape of the dumpling.

Yoo Joonghyuk raised his hand to rub his sore temples and opened his phone.

— 54 missed calls

There were many calls looking for him.

"Obaboni. That's it."

The rustling sound woke Yoo Miah up.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly looked around. The house was messy and the events that happened yesterday appeared in his mind one after another.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked Yoo Miah what happened yesterday.

It's very confusing, but in short...

"When you woke up, you found yourself lying on a bench in an unfamiliar park, and a white-haired woman was taking care of you."

"Yes."

"And what else?"

"Bi-sa ."

"Visa?"

"Eat bi-sa. I'm so hungry!"

It seemed like she was talking about pizza.

"You're good."

Yoo Joonghyuk remembered the woman and the dumpling he saw in his dream last night.

She stuck a silver needle into those smoking teenagers.

Why was she there? Why did she save him?

Why did she carry such a needle?

He was only sure of one thing: it was that woman who took him and Yoo Miah home, said goodbye to her and left.

Even though he didn't even know her name, considering the situation, it seemed like she didn't kidnap or do anything to hurt Yoo Miah.

Yoo Joonghyuk sighed and said.

“Not everyone who gives you pizza is a good person. From now on absolutely—”

“Hip. Only you.”

“Why were you going to the park?”

“I was already there when I woke up.”

“So what was your last memory before you fell asleep?”

“The argument.”

Before meeting the girl, Yoo Miah's last memory was eating dinner prepared by manager Kang Woohyun and then falling asleep on the sofa.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his phone again. Amid the angry messages from the coaches, he came across a familiar name. Kang Woohyun.

— Joonghyuk, I'm sorry.

He immediately called back, but Kang Woohyun didn't pick up.

What was he apologizing for? Because he couldn't take good care of Miah?

Or is it because he suddenly disappeared and cut off contact?

If not then.....

How the hell did that woman find Mia anyway?

Park Jinsang's words flashed in his mind, giving rise to a bad premonition.

— Just lose one match.

Yoo Joonghyuk made a simple salad for breakfast and rearranged his thinking.

Last night, Kang Woohyun took Yoo Miah away and disappeared.

Today is the last match before the playoffs.

Park Jinsang wants him to lose today's match.

“Yoo Miah. I'll go with you today.”

“Yah!! I'll bounce the Hokey Pokey with you.”

“Not today.”

Originally, he couldn't take Yoo Miah to the competition, but just try, there will be a way.

Yoo Joonghyuk remembered the face of the new employee he just met yesterday.

“It hurts again.”

While Yoo Miah sat gloomily eating vegetables and fried eggs, Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the clock. At this point, no matter how fast you run, it will be too late. Can he arrive in time?

At that moment, the phone rang.

— Shit, where are you?

The caller was not Park Jinsang or Kang Woohyun but another coach of the team. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't remember his name very well, so he answered.

“At home.”

The coach immediately became angry.

- Are you crazy? Why didn't you pick up the phone? Do you want to protest your manager's resignation? What if you still haven't started yet?

“Kang Woohyun quit his job?”

- What? Didn't he say anything to you?

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment then said he didn't know. Then, the other coach sighed and added.

— Okay, I've sent someone else to you urgently. Come as early as possible. There's no time left, hurry up!

Before Yoo Joonghyuk could answer anything, the other coach hung up the phone.

The doorbell rang right after he turned off the phone. A familiar figure was waving over the intercom.

【I thought he liked dumplings since he was born.】

“Ah, are you eating? I'm sorry.”

The new employee immediately rushed into the house and stared at the salad that Yoo Joonghyuk made.

“Um... Do you guys only eat this? In any case, wouldn't it be better to give children a little more variety?”

“Bi-sa.”

“Pizza? Do you want to eat pizza?”

Probably because she found Yoo Miah too cute, the new employee immediately patted her head.

Yoo Joonghyuk narrowed his eyes and said.

“There's no time to procrastinate anymore.”

“I parked the car outside so we can move now.”

The new employee smiled lightly and gestured to the two with her hand. After finishing preparing, Yoo Joonghyuk hugged Yoo Miah and sat in the back seat. The new employee immediately started the car. For some reason, her actions were a bit clumsy.

“Ahem, let's go.”

Yoo Joonghyuk quickly checked the match list for today's match. Now the first match has begun. According to the list, his match was the fifth match. If they were careless, the match could end before it was his turn.

No it could not. How could that ever happen?

In a match of this magnitude, Park Jinsang, as usual, will plan ahead to create a 2:2 draw so that victory or defeat will be decided in the final match. It's possible he bribed players from the opposing team.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the back of the new employee's head who was concentrating on driving.

"What is your name?"

"Name? Um... have you seen my coat?"

The new employee pointed to the coat draped over the passenger seat. The name tag is attached to the shirt pocket.

Y.S Manager.

Yoo Joonghyuk responded.

"This is an abbreviation."

"Haha. Yes... Before we get there, can you guess my name?"

Y.S..... Y.S.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment then said.

"Yooseong."

The new employee was silent for a moment then replied.

"My name is almost the same."

Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head.

"You don't want to reveal your name?"

"Yes, I don't want to say my name."

The car exited the alley and drove straight onto the avenue. But it couldn't speed up. Especially when going to the bridge, it almost stood still.

"Traffic jam. Swimming across is faster."

"Then why don't you do it?"

"Um, how about doing that? Otherwise, ride a fish across the river."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't understand what the new employee was talking about. Before doubting whether this girl was Park Jinsang's insider or not, he must first ask whether she was normal or not.

The coach's messages kept coming.

— Where have you been?

Yoo Joonghyuk bent down to look at Yoo Miah sleeping soundly on his lap and calculated the distance and remaining time until reaching the destination. Even though they would be a little late, they could still arrive before his match time. The closer you get to the end of the avenue, the less traffic congestion. As expected, just passing that part is enough—

Keeeeeek, a shrill screech rang out. Several black sedans squeezed in on both sides of their car.

The new employee grumbled.

"Aww..... What a bother."

Several cars jumped in line, obstructing traffic and intentionally prolonging the time in an unusual way. That's why they got stuck in a traffic jam at the end of the road that they could have quickly passed.

If you say this is just a coincidence, I'd be really upset.

The new employee asked.

"Have you made enemies with someone again?"

...Again?

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment then answered.

"I do not know."

"Looks like someone has a grudge against you."

Popping.

Someone banged on the glass door.

"None of my business."

"Someone definitely has a grudge."

Men in black suits in several sedans surrounded their car.

After blocking the exit from the back seat, they opened their mouths.

Get out.

Looking at their mouths, he was sure they said so. He didn't know why they asked them to get out of the car, but it seemed like getting out of the car wouldn't do any good.

Obviously someone ordered them to do that.

But even if it was Park Jinsang, he couldn't have imagined that he would go to this extent.

That means that this betting match was very big.

Yoo Joonghyuk's face stiffened. Just as he was about to open his mouth to say something.

"Hold tight."

Along with the new employee's words, the car accelerated rapidly. Behind him, several guys in suits were shouting something in panic. In the blink of an eye, the girl widened the distance, turned sharply into the alley and then changed to a new lane.

The new employee said.

"Shall we go to the police station? I think now is not the time to compete."

Yoo Joonghyuk silently looked at the new employee. The girl continued speaking.

"If not, then... shall we just keep going like this?"

He couldn't read the new employee's face reflected in the rearview mirror. He still hasn't stopped doubting the girl. But his mind was wavering at her words.

"Do you want to go to the Han River? Sitting and eating pizza by the Han River is very delicious."

"Bi-sa..."

Yoo Joonghyuk held Yoo Miah's hand tightly, she was talking in her sleep. If Park Jinsang had sent the new employee, then when the guys in suits surrounded them, she would have opened the door for them.

"Did you hear something?"

"I heard and saw many things. Anyway, we should run as far as possible now, right? Anywhere is better than here."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at Yoo Miah while sleeping and smacked his mouth.

The new employee was right. In this situation, normal people would run away. It's best to go to the police station and ask for protection, or at least hide somewhere where you can ensure your safety.

At least, if all of this is Park Jinsang's actions, then his purpose was very clear.

To prevent Yoo Joonghyuk from participating in today's match.

If so, as long as he doesn't go to the gym, he will be safe.

"Go to the gym."

"Why?"

Yoo Joonghyuk doesn't know what he's good at. If there was a god who created this world, there would have been a list of his specialties recorded by that god.

But that list would not be long.

Although he often heard people say that he had a handsome face, he did not have the talent to become a singer, actor or show artist. He doesn't know how to sing, doesn't know how to act, doesn't know how to regulate the atmosphere or please others. Even when taking pictures, he has a habit of frowning so it was difficult to take a satisfactory photo.

But there is at least one thing Yoo Joonghyuk is definitely very good at.

"Obaboni plays games. He's a good gamer."

He didn't know when Yoo Miah woke up raised her pinky finger and said that.

The new employee said nothing. Yoo Joonghyuk was also silent. Only the sound of the exhaust pipe and the noisy engine still echoed. Occasionally there was also the sound of car horns from behind.

Normally in such a situation, no one would choose to do that.

But he was not born like a normal person.

He had almost no memories of his childhood, not even the faces of his parents. He doesn't remember clearly when he was abandoned or when he started living alone. He was alone, grew up alone but still lived until now.

Yoo Joonghyuk patted Yoo Miah's head and continued.

"I have to be there. At least for now."

When a player avoids competing, it means he has betrayed everyone's trust. In a situation where past rumors have piled up like a mountain, and he is hated by both the association and his teammates, if he runs away now, his career as a player will be over.

If that happened, he wouldn't be able to take care of Miah anymore.

Even if he successfully escapes and is temporarily safe, what will happen next? Maybe Park Jinsang will advise him to bribe again. And he did not hesitate to continue to harm him like now.

He couldn't hide like this forever.

Maybe he should explain this situation to the new manager. Hope she understands and calmly reconsiders. Even though we had only met for two days, the new manager was more affectionate and kinder than he thought, so maybe she would understand him.

But Yoo Joonghyuk is not the type of person who expects miracles to happen twice. So.

"Go to the gym."

That was all Yoo Joonghyuk could say. And then, the new employee opened her mouth.

"That's how I protect the world."

How to protect the world.

He had never heard anyone talk like that. That phrase could appear in any story.

The new employee continued.

"But this uncle."

".....?"

"One day you might not be able to play games anymore."

He was about to ask her what nonsense she was suddenly talking about, but the new employee continued.

"If so, then what do you want to do?"

"I've never thought about that."

"You have to think first. What do you want to do after retiring?"

"It will be long before I retire."

"But the world could suddenly be destroyed tomorrow."

For some reason, Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly felt that it was difficult for him to keep up with the new employee's thinking speed.

Still, the girl continued.

"Who knows, countless monsters could suddenly appear and wreak havoc on Seoul."

"There must still be something like a game even then."

The new employee looked at Yoo Joonghyuk with eyes as if she heard something ridiculous and then said.

"It's possible, but... in that situation, aren't there other things besides games? Things that need to be done, for example."

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment about the new employee's words.

He imagined a world that has been completely destroyed, where no one plays games, and games are no longer games. A world filled with monsters.

For some reason, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't find it strange at all.

Yoo Joonghyuk remembered the pitch-black darkness in that semi-underground camp. No one played games there. But in the darkness, Yoo Joonghyuk killed monsters, killed people, climbed the ranks and survived.

“No matter what, I will survive.”

“And then what?”

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at his turned off phone and forced himself to mumble.

“Maybe I will search for the person who created me.”

Having finished speaking, Yoo Joonghyuk still couldn't understand why he suddenly blurted out such words.

“That's it.”

“.....”

“Can I ask another question?”

“Why not.”

“Since when do you like dumplings?”

“...What do you mean?”

Through the rearview mirror, he saw black sedans following them. The new employee stepped on the gas again. Despite her young age, the girl's driving skills are very good. The scene where she changed lanes while passing the cars in front looked like something out of a movie.

“What did you do before?”

“I only work in the company.”

“Which company?”

“It's just... a company.”

“So why did you quit your job?”

“Because the representative keeps dying.”

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know if what the new employee said was some kind of joke or not.

“When did you get your driver's license?”

"I haven't gotten my license yet."

"What?"

"I don't have time and no one gave me a license... Well, I'm so familiar with the wheel, probably because I ride a dragon."

Dragon?

Just as the new employee was about to open her mouth to continue speaking, a loud bang rang out and time seemed to stop. People's bodies floated in the air, the car's front window shattered into sharp pieces. And then, a strong impact shook his whole body.

Yoo Joonghyuk instinctively hugged Yoo Miah. The surroundings shook violently, he felt something soft covering his entire body.

As he gasped and struggled to regain consciousness, Yoo Joonghyuk realized that an accident had occurred.

Was it the new employee's driving fault? Or were they the ones who acted earlier?

Fortunately, Yoo Miah was still safe in his arms. However, his right arm muscles were a bit sore. Probably slightly injured.

New employee.

Yoo Joonghyuk staggered to his feet and looked around. The front seat was crushed and the bonnet was so broken that it no longer had any shape. The accident was more serious than he thought.

At this point, the match was no longer important.

"This!"

He had to take her to the hospital. There is no way the driver can be unharmed in an accident that completely destroys the front of the car like this.

But he didn't see the new employee anywhere.

Knock knock, hearing a knock, he looked around and saw the new employee knocking on the door from the outside. Yoo Joonghyuk hugged Yoo Miah, struggling to escape.

Yoo Joonghyuk wanted to ask. What happened? She was injured in—

"Are you okay?"

"Miss-"

"I'm okay. And over there is the gym. Please run now! It's not too late now!"

It was a serious accident.

It's so serious that it would not be unusual for people to die.

But how.

"Player Yoo Joonghyuk."

The guys in suits following them got out of the car one by one.

"Let me worry here. Please do what you need to do now."

Impossible. There were many men on the other side while the employee was just a young girl. Including him, this battle still had no chance of winning.

"Don't resist, just obediently follow us and no one will get hurt—"

The man who walked forward and said some nonsense suddenly collapsed forward. The rest of them widened their eyes in surprise.

The new employee had already stepped forward and was slowly retracting her legs.

Kicking position.

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't distinguish whether what he just saw was real or not. Had he not woken up from yesterday's hallucination? Or is he still in a dream and unable to escape that semi-underground camp?

"Wake up, uncle!"

Seeing the new employee look back, Yoo Joonghyuk blinked in panic.

The girl said, "Don't worry too much. She's probably done handling the situation by now. And after this... you don't need to worry anymore. At least until the world is destroyed."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know what the new employee was talking about. Her words were like comments on the other side of the wall. The words came from a world he didn't know but he really wanted to know.

So he tried to understand it but in the end had to give up.

There are things that people can only accept before understanding what they mean. Right now Yoo Joonghyuk had realized that truth.

“I’ll call the police, so take your chance and run away.”

Now Yoo Joonghyuk only knows two things.

The new employee used to work in a company where the representatives kept dying and were much stronger than the guys in suits.

And he must go to the gym immediately.

The new employee smiled at Yoo Joonghyuk as he carried Yoo Miah away. A smile that was completely different from her previous friendly smile. The smile contained something from a long time ago that he could not explain. Like the confidence in yourself that has taken many years to finally gain.

The new employee knocked out two other men and waved them off.

“Don’t give up until the end! You’re the best at that!”

Remembering that last moment, Yoo Joonghyuk couldn’t forget the new employee’s face for a long time.

【Did you find the fragment of the anecdote?】

【Yes, the collection is complete.】

【As expected, uncle ■■ is here..... How are the manager and that coach?】

【Very interesting.】

Yoo Joonghyuk hasn’t been late to a match yet. He listened to the coach’s nagging words and received a piercing glare from the supervisor, but he came to compete anyway.

The score is 2-2, as expected.

Now is the moment to decide which team will advance to the play-off round through the final match, the decisive ACE match. Of course, the opponent was a player considered one of his rivals.

He wondered if it was because his condition was different today? Right from the beginning of the match, the situation was unfavorable for Yoo Joonghyuk.

Right arm ached constantly. My mind was confused.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought of Yoo Miah waiting for him in the waiting room. Park Jinsang was not seen sitting on the coach's chair. He remembered the scene where the board of directors and supervisors were hastily discussing something.

— Ah, player Yoo Joonghyuk's physical strength is very unusual. From the beginning, the match became unfavorable for him. GG [1] is about to appear.

— Player Yoo Joonghyuk is known to GG very quickly.

Yoo Joonghyuk did not give up. Normally, he would have ended the match by this time, but somehow Yoo Joonghyuk continued the game. He won a point, then another, taking advantage of his opponent's carelessness to win a few small local wars.

— What an amazing battle.

— This is not the usual style of player Yoo Joonghyuk, right?

In the second half of the match, his opponent also began to feel tense.

The battle was still quite unfavorable for him, but Yoo Joonghyuk fought with all his might. Every building to every unit, everything is under his control.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought of the new employee who stayed behind to fight with the guys in suits so he could come here, thought of the white-haired woman who found Yoo Miah and then disappeared.

And he thought of his parents, who were probably watching this match somewhere.

The key units fell one after another and the result of victory or defeat was also decided. Yoo Joonghyuk did not give up until the final battle was over.

Fight and fight again. Until there were no more units left to mobilize, Yoo Joonghyuk's hand stopped.

— Wow! Winner and loser have been decided!

He slowly took a breath and blinked back at the ruins of the battlefield.

The scene where everything in the world was destroyed.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at that scene for a long time. When the door to the game room opened, outside the destroyed world in the computer screen, a large audience was waiting for him to appear.

At the end of that scene were familiar faces.

The blonde employee. And the white-haired woman who saved Yoo Miah.

Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly stood up and left the game room. But after going out, he could no longer see their silhouettes.

After the match, Yoo Joonghyuk grabbed the coach and asked about the new employee who helped him.

— What are you saying? Didn't you come by taxi?

The coach did not know the new employee.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked again if he was the one who sent that girl to him.

— Me? I'm not sure. This year there are only one or two new employees. Anyway, everyone worked hard today. Even though they lost, the match evaluation was still very good.

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't say a word.

In the end, he lost and his team failed to advance to the play-offs.

But the coach's reaction wasn't bad either.

— Playoffs are not an issue right now. The association and the whole team have been turned upside down. Rumor has it that they plan to cancel the results of this round's matches.

—What.....

— Don't you follow the news?

Park Jinsang went to the police station and turned himself in right before the match started.

He didn't know why he chose that.

He only knew one thing: Park Jinsang came to the police station with his face covered in blood. After confessing that he was a match broker, he handed over a list of all the players and sponsors involved in the case.

— Because of that bastard, our players are finished. But Joonghyuk you..... I know but I still have to watch it again. You are not on Park Jinsang's list.

All the way home that day, Yoo Joonghyuk felt lightheaded.

"Obaboni how did it go?"

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment about the player who played against him today.

"Considering the total results, you are ahead so it doesn't count as a loss."

"That means you won?"

"Overall, you win, so in the end you win."

"O-see."

For a moment, Yoo Joonghyuk thought that the word 'Obaboni' actually had a different meaning.

He opened his phone to see the new articles appearing on the portal homepage.

— Even though we lost, it was a great match. Doesn't it deserve to be considered a classic? Player Yoo Joonghyuk's unusual playing style. It can be said that it makes people's souls vibrate.

Below the article quoting the commentator's statement are comments.

— Did you watch Yoo Joonghyuk's match today? Truly the best match ever.

- Recognize. Ba Vuong's playing level has improved. The game becomes more and more interesting.

— But is it true that only Yoo Joonghyuk is not on the list? Does he not accept real money?

— Looking at Yoo Joonghyuk's usual isolated behavior, it's probably the broker who ordered them all to do that.

—But now this round seems to have been cancelled. Among the top players, there is almost no one who does not participate in betting.

I don't understand why he can't see the hidden comments anymore.

Yoo Joonghyuk continued reading the headlines of the articles.

— Official announcement of the Association, canceling the results of all official matches today.

— The list of players participating in matchmaking has been revealed.....

— Shocking match-fixing incident in the Esports world.....

“Obaboni. Hand.”

Yoo Joonghyuk put down the phone and held Yoo Miah's hand tightly.

Night quickly covered Seoul, the street lights lit up one after another. Yoo Joonghyuk quietly looked at the street lights and then suddenly looked around.

White steam drifted here from across the street.

A couple laughing and talking loudly was eating hot fish cakes together. And as the anticipation slowly subsided, Yoo Joonghyuk held Yoo Miah's hand and crossed the street.

Did that really happen?

He could see the dim stars in the night sky rising rapidly.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the stars. He and Yoo Miah walked in the darkness under the light of the stars. He vaguely saw the silhouette of the supermarket he went to yesterday. Yoo Miah held his hand tightly.

“What are we eating tonight, Obaboni?”

The human body is formed from what it absorbs.

Yoo Joonghyuk still thought so. At home there still was a bunch of lettuce that was washed this morning. Not finishing that salad and then eating something else for Yoo Joonghyuk was truly a waste. He couldn't understand why people were so wasteful. But strangely, at that moment, a sentence suddenly rang in Yoo Joonghyuk's ears.

— But the world could suddenly be destroyed tomorrow.

For Yoo Joonghyuk at the present time, that sentence seems a bit distant and obscure like stars from a distant universe. If so, so what?

But perhaps today was already a day full of absurdities.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment, then he looked up at the distant sky and said.

“Pizza.”