

Jiwoo Kim's

Yeouya (여우야)

The rattling of the washing machine had become frequent and thunderous. Despite that, the constant strike of the clock was very much distinct—it had become more brisk, even.

There was no other sound in the room, except for the persistent low hum of the refrigerator that seemed to flaunt the years it had encountered.

The scent of dried coffee beans filled the air. The desk, overflowing with half-opened crime thriller books, had several stale coffee-stained mugs compacting the narrow spaces. Along with the lingering scent, my eyes blankly gazed. Then I squeezed them shut, an immediate sigh escaping my lips.

I grimaced and deleted the entire text I had written from yesterday evening till the next sunrise. I irritatedly took my glasses off, knowing it was simply impossible to finish the promised manuscript by next month.

It had been happening for weeks now that I hadn't been able to write for my fifth, next book. I was aware of how eager and high-expecting the public was, including many thriller, and horror fans. Critics pointed out how I needed to come up with something different and fresh since my books were 'stubbornly narrow-minded, and lacking emotional literary sentiment'. Some would criticize the almost non-existent romance and my almost pessimistic view of the world; I simply believed that people had the right to know the truth, which was far away from made-up fantasies.

I indeed felt the pressure but thought it would be like any other time I wrote my murder mystery books—something I excelled at nonetheless. But I was completely wrong, as it did not go my way at all; the more that I attempted to write, strangely, the even more perplexed and clueless I became than before.

Over time, I became utterly infuriated. On top of being far behind my usual schedule and sabotaging my routines, I had become almost pathetic—I was an emotional, complete mess. It wrecked my pride that I was not able to keep my composure like my usual self but rather let a mere, so-called burnout happen.

I started to hear raindrops tapping on the window. I pushed the window open to an irritatingly clear, beautiful day. The warm sunlight, blossoming cherry blossoms, and cheery conversations seemed to be showered by life.

Perhaps a sunshower, I thought. Weird, why do I feel like I am familiar with this?

It did not take long for me to realize why—I instantly became unable to move, feeling a forgotten, old memory emerging. An unexpected revisit of the feeling that I thought I wouldn't be reminded of again.

It has already been ten years since I first met Yuna in my freshman year in college.

Even back then, I was a determined youth who ought to start publishing my cautiously written writings anytime soon. She was also a freshman who was a Creative Writing major, but we did not have any connections or overlapping classes to know each other any more than that. Besides, we were the complete opposites—she was an optimistic, cheery person that I would often catch excitedly chatting with friends surrounding her.

It was a rainy day when I stayed in the school library to finish my assignments. That day, I left the library sooner than planned with a headache that made it impossible to concentrate. I decided I should go back home early and take medicine.

I stood in front of the entrance of the building, not knowing what to do, as I hadn't expected rainfall. I hadn't brought an umbrella and the raindrops were only getting thicker and fiercer; it was obvious my cold would worsen if I went out there. I figured it would be better to wait for the rain to stop, as it would just be a Spring shower.

When the rain didn't seem to be stopping anytime soon and I became impatient and was about to go, I heard a high-pitched voice call my name.

“Jinyoung!”

When I looked back in the direction the voice came from, I saw Yuna, looking a bit flushed as if she was rushing. She held out a lemon-colored umbrella, shoving it in my hand before I could even think.

“Here, you don’t have an umbrella, right? You can have mine,” he said as she tied her hair into a ponytail casually and firmly put on her hood.

“Do you know me? You don’t have to do this,” I said, slightly frowning as I extended the umbrella back in front of her.

“I heard you coughing from miles away. Besides, I know you. You’re Jinyoung.”

I was stunned to even object, and my mouth was kept open in silence. Dazed, I repeatedly looked at the umbrella and Yuna with her wide-opened eyes and tilted head to the side.

“Anyways, I’m kind of in a rush right now. Bye!”

Yuna gently pushed the hand I was holding the umbrella to me, flashing an assuring smile. Just like that, she stepped in the rain and skipped further away before I could stop her.

I stood alone for a few moments dumbfounded, the umbrella still in my hand, as if a storm had gone by.

What a strange person. I thought to myself, as I walked in the rain holding the acquaintance’s yellow umbrella. *Yuna Lee. She really must have her head up in the clouds.*

What has gotten into me? I couldn’t believe that I was reminded of a memory from such a long time ago, out of nowhere. It was unimportant as well as not being a good memory.

I shook my head as I reached out for coffee, only to find half a dozen empty mugs on the table. I piled them together and carried them to the kitchen, dumping all of them into the sink.

Get a hold of yourself. There’s no time to waste.

I got a new glass filled with iced water and drank it all down at once. My head felt like it was about to break because of the coldness, but I was undoubtedly clear-headed.

I sat down in my seat again, hands on the keyboard, hoping to progress the manuscript in any kind of way.

The sun was now fully set, the sky dark. I had written absolute gibberish for the past hours; I had to admit that I would make no difference whatsoever no matter the time and effort I put in.

I pushed away the computer and my books as I dug my face into my arm folded on the table.

My breaths were inconsistent and shallow, and I could feel the weight of my head sinking. The silence was louder and ringing, as I heard the whir of the fridge and the sound of the clock ticking away.

Oddly, at that moment I felt that I could not stand the stillness of my same lonely home. I stood up and strode to the kitchen, and I was turning on the radio that was left unused in the corner below the kitchen shelf the next thing I knew. I adjusted the knob and increased its volume—soon enough, I could hear a familiar song coming out.

창 밖엔 서글픈 비만 내려오네

Sorrowful rain continues to rain outside the window

내 마음 너무 안타까워

My pitiful heart

이젠 다시 볼 수가 없기에

I won't see you again

처음 만났던 그 날도 비가 왔어

It rained the first day we met too

우산도 없이 마냥 걸었었지

We just walked in the rain together

너의 눈빛 촉촉히 빛났지

The look of your eyes twinkling lively

What is with today?

It was not a surprise for me to know this song by the 90s Korean band, the Classic. It was among the only few songs I knew of—which was possibly since I heard it countless times because of Yuna. It was getting remarkable in a way, how I had come across pieces of the past on this particular day.

It was the middle of Autumn when Yuna and I started our relationship.

We were just like any other typical couple; we took the same courses, studied for exams together, and went to places after our classes. We half in jest talked about how we would be successful writers and read each other's stories. Yuna was passionate about the love stories she wrote and enjoyed reading as much as I did.

She would often tease me about how my writing was so rational, and I would say how helplessly romantic she was, her story full of flowers and sunshine.

This is my favorite song, she would say, when she played *Yeouya* out loud every time, and I would respond with a smile, *I know*, as always.

이 밤 너에게 주고픈 노래

Tonight, the song I want to give you

너만을 사랑하고 있다는 걸

Is that I'm in love with you

들어줄 사람도 없이 빗속으로 흩어지네

No one to listen, scattering away in the rain

너의 이름을 불러보지만

I try to call your name

닿을 수 없다는 걸 알고 있어
But I know I can't reach you

긴 밤을 꼬박 새우고 빗속으로
Staying up the long night, into the rain

어느새 새벽이 오고 있어
The dawn is approaching

We were together for four years until we broke up.

On the surface, we seemed to get along, but in reality, we would fight every day because of our differences. Fights that started from trivial matters would soon turn into long and tedious arguments, and we would turn our backs on each other. Yuna would complain, and I would be insensitive. The day we ended our relationship was after we had a big fight, the decision blurted out impulsive and childish.

We finished the last year of college and lost touch after that, and I gradually forgot about her as I pushed my career as an author. When the thought of her came to me every once in a while, I would let it falter away, as if it was just the past.

I listened as the song reached the point where the singer sang the chorus again and again, plaintive yet cheerful.

I was young, I thought to myself. Young and oblivious to know any better.

But today, I wanted to hold on to it longer and allow myself to be reminded of the memories.

I put on a zip-up hoodie and headed outside into the pitch-dark night. Hands in my pockets, I walked down until the coffee shop was just around the corner. I rushed inside and joined only one or two others, ordering my usual iced Americano for I knew it would close soon.

“Double-shot iced americano would be 3,000 won¹,” the barista said, receiving my order and proceeding with my payment. I sat down at the nearest table to wait for my order with my number ticket.

The song that played on the radio had been in my mind, and I hummed the lyrics without even realizing it.

Like a twist of fate, I was directly looking at her from the other side of the room—she was giving off a quite different atmosphere, and her hair was cut short—but I could tell with how her eyes looked.

She seemed to be confused, looking around and back at me as if she was confirming that I was looking at her.

“Yuna!”

I called her name, and I could see her eyes widening and her being lost for words as she stood up from her seat.

“Jinyoung, is that you?”

She waved at me, coming to sit in front of my table, her lips curved upward.

“It’s been so long, how have you been?”

I could feel myself becoming delighted with excitement, and could not help but smile.

“So nice to see you again. You know, just working a 9-to-5 office job with minimum wage.”

Without any awkwardness, we talked and even joked as we caught up on what we missed out on during the past ten years. I felt my mind gradually becoming more relaxed and my smile did not leave my face.

I was slightly nodding then stopped for a split second when I then noticed a thin golden ring on her left hand.

“Getting married?”

“Yes, the wedding’s going to be next month, actually.”

¹ \$2.20

After some thought, I asked her.

“How did you meet him?”

“On a blind date. God, I don’t even remember the last time I held books. I think it was after I graduated college and started working,” Yuna said, as she fiddled with the ring around on her finger.

“You’re literally living the dream—Author Jinyoung Yoon, how is your new genius piece going?”

“It’s going... well,” I replied hesitantly and remarked what I was wondering.

“Do you still listen to Yeouya? You know, your favorite song,”

“Was it?! I used to listen to music a lot back in college.”

Yuna opened her mouth in awe, as she grinned.

“By the way, we should get going. It’s getting late,” I said, looking at the time on the clock and watching all the customers leave, except for us.

“It was nice talking to you, get home safely.” I waved at Yuna as I saw her walking away in the opposite direction.

The rain had stopped a long time ago, and I was standing alone in the empty alley, with an unexplainable tint of feeling covered in dark blue. It was not sadness nor nostalgia—but a need for certainty.

“Yuna, are you happy now?”

I said, and I could see Yuna stopping and turning to see me again.

“Yes! You, too?”

Yuna beamed and answered out loud.

“Yeah, I think so.”

I replied and left the place, watching her disappear shortly as well.

Before I sent the finished manuscript, I clicked the document open for the last time.

*Yeoubi*² as the working title, the writing was something I would not write normally. It was a completely different style or genre from what I would normally write, something the readers would not be expecting from me. I did not know for myself if I was doing the right thing, and if it was good enough. However, without hesitation, I submitted the manuscript anyway—with *Yeouya* continuing to play aloud in the living room.

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닿을 수 없다는 걸 알고 있어
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Staying up the long night, into the rain

어느새 새벽이 오고 있어...³
The dawn is approaching

²“여우비”, means sun shower in Korean.

On a side note, “여우” Yeou, means fox in Korean, “비” meaning rain.

³Gwangjin Kim, *여우야(女雨夜)*, 1995