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碩士學位論文

Happy to be born in this world

(이 세상에 태어나길 참 잘했다)



濟州大學校 通譯大學院

韓英科

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2011年 2月

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Happy to be born in this world

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(Supervised by Professor Kyung-Ran Park)

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Abstract

There was a boy whose mother passed away while giving a birth to him and father abandoned him to leave for to America. So this boy lives with his aunt who runs an art academy. His grandmother lives close to them.

The boy has two best friends. They always hang around together whenever they can. During a summer vacation, his two best friends went to other places to study English. He felt betrayed for he heard about this from his aunt. Therefore, he made up his mind to live with his father to study English abroad.

He receives a warm welcome from his father and his other family at the airport. However, he intently keeps a distance from his father to show that he is not planning to stay in America for a long time.

One day, his school invites a famous person to give a speech. The famous person talks about his life. The boy was touched by the story and he begins to think that he is happy to be born in this world.

Author, Park Wan-Suh, tells us that happiness is near us. We just can't see it because we try to find happiness from far away. After reading this novel³, you will think that you are happy to be born in this world, too.

감사의 글

세심한 지도와 많은 격려로 이끌어 주신 박경란 교수님, 김재원 교수님, 그리고 김원보 교수님께 진심으로 감사드립니다.

그리고 항상 사랑으로 키워주시고 자식을 믿어주신 부모님께 감사의 말씀을 드립니다. 바르게 생각하고 행동할 수 있도록 가르쳐 주신 부모님께 자랑스러운 아들이 되기 위해 더욱 성장하도록 노력하겠습니다.

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1. I am Bokdengyi (a lucky guy)

My name is Bok Dong Kim. In a new semester, when a teacher was taking attendance, the teacher called me “Bok-Deng” instead of “Bok-Dong” with a small laugh. The kids laughed after the teacher, too. My lively answer “Yes” made some kids look around to find me. I don’t find my name funny or shameful, but hearing the echo of my name sometimes makes me sad. Afterwards, I found out how my dad named me. I didn’t hear it directly from somebody but through my grandmother and aunt’s conversation. I live with my aunt. My grandmother lives close to us, but she lives with my uncle. Now, my dad lives in America. My mother passed away as soon as she gave birth to me. When I was inside her belly, she was already destined to die. I have no idea what kind of illness she had. My father and my mother knew that giving birth was dangerous, like preparing for death. My mother ignored the doctor’s stern warning, and she had a baby. My father begged my mother to get rid of the baby, but it didn’t work. He asked for my grandmother’s help and he fully mobilized my mother’s family to force her to get rid of me. But she didn’t listen to anyone and finally gave birth to me. People say that she didn’t listen to anyone but she might have heard my breathing and squirming inside her belly.

After a difficult birth, my mother passed away and my father who loved my mother so much ran away from me for killing her. After I was able to walk and understand, he came back only once. He hugged me and was gone. According to my aunt, I was a pretty and handsome baby who made people turn their face to look back two times, and three times.

But even seeing this handsome baby, I think that my father didn’t feel any love or responsibility toward this baby. Until now, my grandmother curses my father calling him a spiteful guy. My aunt hates to hear my grandmother saying this to my father in front of me. He deserved to be called a spiteful guy because he didn’t come back to see me after he left. That time, I was too young to remember my father’s face, but he may remember my face. It was a bit relieving to think that I was a pretty baby when I was young, but that was

no use, because I couldn't hold my father. My father saw me just once, and he immigrated to America. Most of my death mother's relatives live in Korea, but all of my father's brothers and sisters live in America. They maybe have called in my father who couldn't settle his mind and wandered around. My father who came to see me for the first time and the last did one thing for me. That was, he put me on the family register. Therefore, Bok Dong was chosen by my father. In fact, my father didn't name it. That time, when my grandmother saw me, she hugged me and liked me, and then she would push me away. I heard she said "Oh you are extremely unlucky," and "You are only handsome, but you have no luck at all." I heard that she also mistreated me, just like you would on enemy.

My father was disappointed about that, so he ran out with a sad look. Then, he named me Bok Dong, and he put me on the family register. If he named me, wishing for me to have luck, I could bear a name that sounds a bit "country-like". But, if he named me just to defy to his mother-in-law, I doubt his qualifications as a father, but I am trying not to pay attention to this trifle. I am an abandoned kid. I can live however I want, and there is no one who will say anything to me. I can let my aunt's nagging go in one ear and out of the other. I have decided to make my own name and use it when I grow up and live on my own. Therefore, my current name is just temporary. I will let the world know my real name that I made, and I will act like an adult. To throw away my father's insincere gift demonstratively, I want to become an adult as soon as possible. Fortunately, singers or actors who I want to become are working using stage names that they made themselves. I don't see why I can't name myself either "Thunder" or "Lighting" when there is "Rain". To call my name that I like and made by me, it's not a bad idea to be a designer or a writer. When I watch a drama, even the waiter uses a fake name. For my aunt who always says whatever you do you have got to be the best, it might be better to become a top-notch waiter than become a third-rate star or an artist. There are many ways to be free from my name.

2. Friends

Kook-II, Jun Gal and I have been good friends since we were kids. They both live with their parents. Jun Gal has a younger sister and Kook-II has an older brother. Just hearing their solemn names makes me sick. I can feel how much effort their parents put in to name them. At least, they were named with a dream for sure. That's the difference between me and them. But that doesn't mean I feel inferior to them. Their wish, like mine, is to be popular with another name.

On weekends, we always meet up and hang out, play a game, and go to a bathhouse together. We especially like riding bikes. A phone rings "Ring Ring Ring". None of us has a cell phone yet. If one of us buys a cell phone, the other two would die to get one. As we cling together well, my aunt, Jun Gal's mother and Kook II's mother are also close to each other and they cling together well. Kook II's mother is a university professor in a rural city where we live, and Jun Gal's father is a high school science teacher. My aunt likes a household concerned with education. Probably, it is because of me. It is not a normal family that an old maid raises a nephew. She was unnecessarily nervous about caring for me too much or too little. Because she wanted me to be comfortable like a kid from a normal family, it seemed that my aunt was following an exemplary family's education method.

Only in grade one of my elementary school already two kids had a cell phone. That time, when I teased my aunt about getting a cell phone, she said even Kook II and Jun Gal didn't have one. Their father told them that they couldn't have one until they become a middle-school student, so she told me I could never get it until I become a middle-school student. She repeated it twice, firmly contrary to her usual tone. Even now, when I talk about cell phones, my aunt's response is always the same. If Jun Gal or Kook II gets one, she will buy one for me. Similarly, Kook II's and Jun Gal's mother use the same excuse. I am positive that three people planned out and played a trick on us. Kook II, who has many relatives in Seoul, said that we could stand having parents who

don't buy us cell phones until now because we live in a rural area. If we only lived in Seoul it would be a different story. Kook Il discriminates against a rural area about all kinds of things. The charm of a cell phone is that it shows a name so you can see where the call comes from. What's the point of envying for something that I don't have. There is no point in envying something that I don't have. Even if a name doesn't show up, only hearing the phone ring I know it is from Jun Gal. My intuition has never been wrong. As expected it was Jun Gal.

"I am Jun Gal, can you come out to play?"

"Of course, I've lots of time."

"Here, I knew it, where do you want to meet?"

"Hmm, let's meet up in front of the burger place as always."

"Ok! Let's call Kook Il too. I will call."

Jun Gal said that he is going to call Kook Il so I ran straight to my aunt.

"Aunt, I am going to play outside with my friends."

"Ok, but don't stay out too long."

Even if my aunt didn't say that, I always make up my mind not to stay outside too long. There is tons of homework to do, but I don't want to make her worry. Even though I come home a little bit late, my aunt goes out to look for me. I don't like to see an overprotection but it is painful to see her walking. My aunt walks with a limp. When she was young, infantile paralysis was widely spread in Korea. It is good that she came back from the dead. When she walks with one paralyzed leg, she limps a lot. It is heartbreaking to see my aunt, who has a pretty face, limping. Once, when I was coming out from a pc room after playing a game until it was dusk, I saw from the distance that my aunt was limping and looking for me. Unconsciously, I took a side way and went home earlier than my aunt and then I waited for her. My aunt is pretty. I bet that my mother was pretty just like my aunt. According to my aunt or maternal grandmother, she was prettier than her. My aunt has a beautiful heart so she sincerely loves me. Knowing that doesn't fulfill my mind that she is not my

mother. If my mother is 100 percent, my aunt would be short 30 percent which is 70 percent. I feel bad for myself for depending on aunt whose body is imperfect.

I avoided my aunt because I hated myself for this not because I disliked her. As I was waiting for my aunt, I soothed myself who was the wicked man. But when she came back, instead of asking for forgiveness, I scolded my aunt by asking where she was and telling her I was hungry. I hurt my aunt's feeling. She is too kind, so I don't think she could have read my clever trick.

"Ok, I will just play a bit and come back"

"I immediately took my wallet and a key and went out the door.

Then, I unlocked the bike lock, and I took the elevator. When I got on the bike, I felt damn good. Like an arrow, I passed through the apartment's back door, through the playground to the hamburger place. Jun Gal and Kook Il still haven't come out yet. I waited and I figured that they were late because Jun Gal was taking Kook Il out. In fact, they always come out later than me. Ten minutes later, Jun Gal and Kook Il came out on a bicycle.

"Why are you so late? I was waiting for you for a longtime."

"Sorry, I was bringing Kook ill. He wasn't even ready so I had to wait outside for him."

"That's Kook Il"

"What? I wasn't that late... only ten minutes."

"Yes yes, ok... Anyway where do you want to go?"

"Hmmm... let's go to the world cup stadium."

"Should we?"

"Ok, let's go!"

I rode as fast as I could as if I became a cyclist. Not wanting to lose, Kook Il and Jun Gal rode at a furious pace. Just like that, we arrived at a boisterous and scenic world cup stadium.

"Whew, I am exhausted, let's take a break for a bit and go up there."

"Okay!"

We sat down on a bench and were taking a rest.

“Hey, aren’t you guys thirsty?” I said.

“Yes. Hey, buy me a drink.” Kook Il said.

“Hmm, Should I? Well… you bought me last time….

“Then, what about me?” said Jun Gal.

“Whew, I have a no choice. I will buy it for you, too.

“Ha ha, thanks.”

I ran with money to a vending machine. There were quite a lot of people. So I waited in a line. After a while, I finally carried the drinks back to the bench. Jun Gal said “Ha ha, It’s so you.” In these situations, I feel happy buying for my friends. After hanging around at the world cup stadium for a while, we went to a bathhouse.

We took off our clothes and jumped into the cold tub.

“Ahhh, this cool feeling is so good!” Jun Gal said.

“Oh, its cold, I can’t go in.”

Kook Il is sensitive to the cold. Whenever we go into a cold tub, he exaggerates the pain then always comes into the tub last. We have fun by playing jokes on him. He doesn’t mind our pranks.

He gets into the cold tub quicker because of our practical jokes. When we were playing in the cold tub, Kook Il used to play in either a sauna or hot tub. When he adapts to the cold water, we play rock-paper-scissors and hide and seek.

“Rock paper scissors!”

“Yes, Bok Dong, you are a tagger.”

I didn’t mind it, because a tagger is fun too. I turned around and counted 30 seconds in my mind. Meanwhile, I dived, stood up, and got out from the water and started to look for them. I looked inside the crowded tub, a shower room, and a sauna. While I was walking around, I found Kook Il, who was studying my face, behind the pillar, and turned round and round the pillar. As I smiled I said “Hahaha, Kook Il I found you, come out from behind the pillar.”

Kook ill walked out, disappointed.

“Hey, by any chance, you do know where Jun Gal is?”

“I don’t know. We went separately.”

“Ugh. Jun Gal hides pretty well!”

As I remembered where he hid before, I went to that spot. But he wasn’t there.

Feeling so weird, I went back to cold tub. But there was Jun Gal.

“Hey! How did you come here?”

“Ha ha, do you want to know how I came here?”

At first, Jun Gal got into the crowded tub and he was watching me. When I got out of the cold tub and looked in to the tub where he was hiding, he dived. When I passed by he came out of the back and shadowed me. After hearing this, I felt annoyed that I didn’t know it. When I found Kook Il, he went to a shower room and pretended to take a shower. When Kook Il and I were looking at the shower room, he went into a cold tub. We admired him.

“Wow. How come I didn’t know that you were following me? I feel stupid.”

“Ha ha, that is my specialty, mu ha.”

We played around like this for while then we washed, got dressed, and then came outside.

“Hmmm. Where should we go now?”

“Let’s go to a pc room!” Jun Gal said.

“Shall we?”

“Hey, how much money do you have left?”

“I got ten-thousand won.”

“Ok! Let’s play for an hour.”

“What do you want to play?”

“Let’s play Kart-rider.”

“Sure, ha ha I am pretty good at Kart rider.”

“Ha ha, you still can’t beat me. Ha ha you couldn’t beat me last time.”

“Hmm hmm still.”

“Ha ha ha.”

We headed to the pc-bang. We sat on three seats and entered a card number. We ran a Kart-rider. And we started by choosing the hardest map.

“Mu ha ha, I will beat you all.” Jun Gal said confidently.

But, he ended up losing to me. I won first place, Jun Gal was in second place, and Kook Il was in third place.

“You said that you’re good but you have lost to me. He he he.”

“Oh well. I am a human, I make mistakes. One more round, go, go.”

Playing like this, we had a fun time. After we came out from the pc room, we unchained the bike and mounted on it.

“Ah I am starving. Aren’t you guys?”

“Do you guys want to get something to eat?”

“Let’s do that.”

We rushed to a small restaurant.

“What are you going to eat? I will eat Korean sausage and spicy rice cake!”

“Me, too”

“Okay, that’s the best food. Plus, let’s order a flat dumpling.”

“Ha ha ha, it’s going to be tasty.”

After eating deliciously, we left the small restaurant.

“Hey! It is already seven p.m.”

“Uh-oh? I should go home. I don’t want to get yelled at by mother again.”

“Me, either.”

“Then, if you can play Kart-rider, try to log in. Bye.”

“Okay, bye.”

3. Homework

Just in case my aunt started to look for me outside, I ran as fast as I could. I really hate to see my aunt outside. I don’t mind seeing her limping in the house because I got used to it, but seeing her outside embarrasses me. I hate myself for thinking this way, so I don’t want to see it.

“I am back.”

As I was opening the door, I said it with a small voice.

“You are a bit late.”

My aunt said it without a blink or qualm. I was relieved.

“Aren’t you hungry?”

“I am not hungry because I ate outside.”

“Why did you eat outside? You should eat at home.”

“I won’t next time... Aunt, can I play a game now? My friends asked me to play.”

“No. Playing outside is the same thing as playing a game. Just watch a T.V or play by yourself. Okay? Don’t play a game.”

My aunt is always like this. Playing outside is same thing as playing a game. I just don’t understand. I don’t look at the screen when I go play outside. Unwillingly, I turned on the T.V. An entertainment show was on because it was seven o’clock. I watched until eight o’clock as I was laughing out loud. When the show was almost finished, my aunt told me sternly to stop watching T.V and go to do my homework. But that doesn’t scare me at all because her voice is so kind. Finally, I did my homework which I didn’t want to think about it. Though didn’t think I had homework. So, I confidently said that I don’t have any and continued to watch T.V. Finally, it became ten o’clock. I watched too much T.V so I turned it off and went to my room. Just in case, I checked if there was homework. But there were three assignments. They were a bit time-consuming. But it consumes a lot of time; it would take more than an hour and a half. I started to do homework and two hours later, my aunt came into my room and said “What are you doing? Why aren’t you sleeping?”

I instantly flinched. And then, I quickly pretended to pack a bag. But my aunt was a step ahead. “You said that you don’t have any homework.” She said.

“Ah. I forgot about it at that time. I started at ten o’clock and I am almost finished.”

In fact, I am only half way done. The rest of homework was easy and I

thought that I could finish soon. One hour had passed, two hours had passed. It became two o'clock, finally. My aunt woke up and noticed something, so she came to my room again. I felt a prick so I pretended to pack a bag again.

"A while ago, you said that you are almost done."

"Well, actually, there was something that I didn't know."

"You should've asked me, why didn't you ask?"

"I didn't want to get scolded... But now I am really almost finished."

That was true. I had to solve two more problems.

I struggled for 30 more minutes on those problem. Finally, I finished my homework, packed my bag and laid in a bed. Next time, I should play after I check my homework. Then I wouldn't go through trouble like today.

4. An accident

Saturday, it's the weekend again. After I came back from school, I called Jun Gal.

"Hello?"

"Hey, do you have time? If you do let's play."

Without thinking about last week's promise, I made a promise with Jun Gal, called Kook Il, and met up at outside.

"Ah, our class doesn't have homework. Hooray!"

Once again, I winced because of homework.

"Uh, did I have any homework?"

"Our class doesn't have any homework either. Don't worry."

Kook Il and I are in the same class. So I was relieved.

"Whew, what a relief. Last week, I slept at dawn because of homework. That time, I thought that I was going to die."

"Today, you don't have to worry about it."

"Anyway. Where do you want to go?"

We are always like this. We know where we are going but we always ask.

"Let's go to the world cup stadium."

“Okay.”

So we went to the world cup stadium by bicycle just like last week.

“Although we come here every day, it is hard.”

“I am not buying a drink this week.”

“What? Okay…” Friends answered wistfully.

We ended up paying for our own drinks and we rode on the bike again. Although I bought for them last week, no one bought me a drink. So I felt a bit unsatisfied.

“This time, should we go up there?”

“Up where?”

“Up there.”

Jun Gal pointed at a high place. It was pretty high. It looked like it was hard to go up. Nonetheless, I said let's go with challenging spirit. We paddled as best as we could toward the high place. It was too steep so we had to stop at a certain point and we actually had to pull the bikes and walked up there. It was a brief but at the end of hardship we reached the top. The view was very good. It was high so it was cool and we could see the inside of world cup stadium. It was fun to watch people who were at the bottom looked small.

“Wow, What a view.” I said with admiration.

“It was great that I said let's come up.”

We sat on a bench which was at a high place, and then we took a rest for ten minutes and were about to go down.

“Anyway, where should we go down?”

“We can take the same path we took to come up here.”

“Isn't it a bit steep?”

Kook Il is the most timid boy among us. He is not incorrigible, so if we look down on him even a bit, he will take up courage.

“Why are you getting scared of this kind of hill. Don't worry about that, go down slowly as you're using a brake.

“But this is my first time doing this”

“It’s good to experience everything.

“B., but.”

“Don’t worry, you won’t die.”

“Okay, but if you really don’t want to do it, just walk down the hill.”

“N, no. I will ride a bike to go down. But I will go far behind. I might fall down.”

“Okay, then.”

So we got ready. Jun Gal with very cheerful voice said “Now start!” as we were going down fast. I followed him and Kook Il followed me. But when we were half way down, we heard Kook Il’s screaming. Jun Gal and I instantly stopped and looked back. Kook Il fell down. We ran that way.

“Hey! Are you ok? Ah! I told you to walk down if it’s too hard, you stupid.”

“Ouch. It hurts.”

Kook Il’s knee was bleeding. And his hand seemed twisted. Fortunately, his bone didn’t seem to be broken but he couldn’t move his wrist. We decided to assist him home. It was fortunate that his legs didn’t get hurt and only blood shed from knee.

“It hurts.”

“Hang on a little bit, we are almost there.”

“Try to move your wrist a bit. It doesn’t look like it’s broken…”

Even though I said that, I was getting scared that it might have been broken. If it’s broken, it is my and Jun Gal’s fault. I was worried and scared.

“Hey, you ok?”

“Yes, a bit better than before.”

“Ah, here we are. Let’s go in quickly.”

“Okay.”

If Kook Il’s mother sees him, she will be shocked and she will scold us. She may not let us hang around with Kook Il anymore. First, we should say sorry to her, when we see her. Ding dong, I pressed the bell. At the moment, I was nervous, so one second felt like one hour.

“Hey, is that you Kook Il? Friends are here too?” Kook Il said first before I started to say something. I thought that he would tell the truth but he didn’t.

“Mo, mother, I hurt my wrist. I made a mistake while I was riding a bicycle, but I don’t think it is broken.”

He sure is my friend.

“What? These days you play too much. Let’s go to the hospital fast. What about you guys? You guys want to go home?”

“I will go with you.”

Jun Gal and I said that simultaneously. Kook Il’s mother said as she smiled,

“Ok then, wait. I need to change my clothes.”

“Okay.”

As soon Kook Il’s mother went to a main room, we immediately ask Kook Il’s condition.

“Hey, are you okay? I hope you are going to be alright. It is my fault. I shouldn’t have asked you to go down together.”

“No, I should have not asked you to go up in the beginning”

“No, it is my fault that I am not good at riding bike.

As we realized that we blamed ourselves, smiles rose naturally. Just at that moment, Kook Il’s mother came out and said, “Let’s go now. Oh yeah, shouldn’t you guys call your home?” I looked at the clock, and it wasn’t that late. Still, I should tell my aunt about this so I called.

“Hello? Aunt, I will go to the hospital with Kook Il, Jun Gal, and Kook Il’s mother.

“Did you get hurt? What happened?” Aunt asked with hasty voice.

“It’s not me, Kook Il got hurt.”

“What happened?”

“He fell down while riding his bike.”

“Can you put Kook Il’s mother on the phone?”

Kook Il’s mother and my aunt had about a five-minute conversation and hung up the phone. When Jun Gal called his house, his mom wanted to talk to Kook

Il's mother, too. After Kook Il's mother repeated the same conversation, we could finally leave the house.

At the hospital, we sat on a couch which was outside. Kook Il went to the doctor's office and then to the X-ray room. Afterward, he went into the doctor's office and finally got out with a bandage on his injured knee. He told us to go home first, because it would take a long time to put on a cast. Like I said it didn't break, but he had to wear a cast because he had a fracture. It was a relief that it didn't break. But, if he put on a cast it would be same thing, so I didn't feel good. I would feel guilty while he wears a cast.

After coming home, even if I didn't have any homework, I wasn't excited. My aunt was worrying about Kook Il, too, so she was inquisitive about how that happened. I gave a short and blunt reply that it didn't break, but it only cracked, though he still had to wear a cast. I went to my room and turned on the computer. When the computer was booting, I looked at the clock and it was only three o'clock. Cutting though the wind cheerfully while riding a bicycle, an accident happened in which Kook Il got hurt, got freaked out and was fretting in the hospital, I didn't know that all that happened in such a short time. With a dazed mind, just like half awake, I logged on to a game as usual. Jun Gal was online. I played a game with Jun Gal, and the game wasn't fun at all because of the accident. So I said let's meet up outside again at four o'clock. To forget about the accident I asked him to play basketball. Jun Gal agreed with me so I went to the basketball court. This time, Jun Gal came out before me.

He didn't bring Kook Il, that's probably the reason he was early.

"Is Kook Il really going to be all right?" Jun Gal said to me.

"Sure, he will be alright."

We wanted to be free from the fact that he wore a cast with this one word.

I felt a little bit sorry, but we cheerfully played basketball as we put aside the accident. Jun Gal is a lot better at basketball than I. When we play one on one, he always steals my ball.

“Wow, when can I be better than you?”

“Even if the end of the world comes, you can’t beat me.”

“Hey, that’s too far.”

“But it is true. You wouldn’t want to accept it.”

“Hmmm. Your mental condition is abnormal. Do you want to go to a mental hospital together?”

“You.”

We drank soda, joking around with each other, and we took a rest. Joking around is supposed to be fun, but maybe our joke was obnoxious. I felt chilly. Without Kook Il, nothing goes all right. I thought about this even though it hadn’t been a long time since he was gone.

“Ah, it’s hot. Summer vacation is still far away.”

“It is said that this June will be the hottest month in one hundred years or something?”

“When summer or winter comes, the news always says it is the worst snow storm, the worst heat, and the worst cold in years.”

“You’re right, you’re right. They always do.”

“Let’s play basketball again.”

“Let’s stop playing. Even if I try to forget it, I still feel uncomfortable.” I said to Jun Gal and he said that he felt the same way as me. So I went back home with a heavy heart.

The next day, I saw Kook Il wearing a cast at school. I had to help him with various things such as taking notes and eating. Even if we go to the world cup stadium, next time, I should never go up there again. I was thinking about that accident when I got back home. My aunt brought it up again.

“What in the world did you guys do to snap a wrist like that?”

“Just, he fell from the bicycle.”

If I hadn’t been testy, my aunt’s question might have been gone after about ten more minutes. I wondered if other moms have the same habit of asking the same question over and over even though they know what happened.

Ah, I get sick of it. Because my aunt and mother know each other well and we are close to each other, this could be finished like this. But if it was another thing it could have gone on for hours. Now, I can't play with Kook Il for a month. I am getting depressed. A sudden accident brings misfortunes. I finished my homework, packed my bag, and went to bed. I tossed and turned wondering what he is doing, but luckily his right hand wasn't broken.

5. Our friendship

Finally, Kook Il went to school without a cast. At first, he felt a bit uncomfortable, but after a few physical treatments he was fine. I felt better than anyone else, because Kook Il's arm has been cured. I smiled delightfully. At home, my aunt was happy along with me. She moved her head slantwise as she smiled. She wondered if there was anything to celebrate for Kook Il who has gone through such a hardship. When she does that, she is so pretty. My aunt was happier to see me happy than she was to see that Kook Il had recovered. I know her heart. Ah, good-hearted aunt, I felt better. I took it naturally the fact that my aunt didn't get married. I just thought that because of her limp. When I see my very pretty aunt, sometimes I think that she didn't want to get married. Recently, I sometimes think that it is because of me.

Something which you took natural starts to get questioned as it gets old. I don't want to get old. After I became an upper classmen, I saw that my aunt's pretty face, kind-heart and special ability are precious and looked bigger than her uncomfortable leg. A maternal grandmother sometimes looks at me closely and says I have grown up, maybe she reads my mind. Even my grandmother doesn't know that I love my aunt more over I respect her a lot. I don't want to say this to anybody. Not even to Kook Il or Jun Gal. That is my gem inside my mind.

My aunt graduated from an art college and runs an art academy. At first, she was a teacher at another person's academy. My uncle got her a place on the 2nd floor of a building that was packed with other academies, so now she

is a director. In the beginning, she could barely keep it, but I know that it became a popular art academy because of her skill and a good heart.

When I entered an elementary school, it was located near a farming area and factory area, so there were a lot of mixed blood kids and foreigner worker's children among the new students. There wasn't such a kid in my classroom. But I often saw that kids who had different appearance were alienated from the same age group. But that was something that I couldn't help. I didn't want to take interest in something that everybody ignored. Different-looking kids who were peeping at my aunt's academy enviously might be one of those children.

My aunt started to force some of them to come in and she taught them art without tuition fees. It might have ruined the art academy's atmosphere but she didn't care. Among those kids who take a lesson for free, Nam Suk's mother was from Vietnam, and father was from Korea. Eonuk's parents were both from Nepal. Those kids started to show a talent, so my aunt liked it. Then they consecutively won the top prize from the big art contest which was held in Seoul. Specially, Eonuk's prizes were crayons, which were sufficient enough for kids in our school's art club, and he also received oil paints for additional prizes. It was a big award. We had to stand up for a long assembly, because the principal announced this. But this happy occasion will help them to have an indiscriminate, happy school life not only for Nam Suk and Eonuk but also to kids who are in similar situations. I was happy about that. My aunt's art academy became famous, so now she's using two art students. I know that it is because she wants to help art students who are having hard time paying school fees. It is not because she wants to make more money. That's the reason why I respect my aunt.

The generous aunt and Jun Gal's mother discussed how to celebrate Kook II's recovery, and they came up with the idea that three families go out to a beach.

"Are we really going tomorrow?"

"Yes, when we play we play hard. After that we study hard."

Study, study... This word instantly made my body stiff. But my feeling came back to normal, and I brought snacks, sodas, and etc from the supermarket. And my aunt fried pork cutlets which I like, and she also rolled Korean sushi.

The next day, we were going to meet in front of Kook Il's house. When my aunt and I went to Kook Il's house, everybody was gathered already.

"Wow! We are going to the beach!"

"Hey, we should ride a ba-bo!"

We abbreviated a banana boat to ba-bo.

"Yes, it was really fun last year."

We talked about this and that, and we got in to a car.

We took two cars which were Jun Gal's and Kook Il's family car. Three of us got in the same car. A few hours later, we finally arrived at the beach. Though it was morning, there were plenty of people. A big parking lot was almost full of cars, so it was hard to find a parking space. After finding a parking space, we headed to the beach with our belongings

"Wow, it's the beach! Ouch it's hot."

The beach sand was very hot because of sun light. So we jumped as we were walking. The summer vacation will be soon over, but it is a still early summer, and I think that it is the first time the sand was this hot. I got excited. Hot sand made our hearts flutter. The beach under the hot sunlight was packed with a lot of people, so we barely found a spot. We also had to wait for a tube to rent.

"Now, let's go to the beach!"

"Wow!"

We went into the cold sea water, screaming. The sea water was cold, but outside was hot. So we felt cool. We rode the waves with tubes, played with sand, and we went underwater. We played a lot of things. As we were playing, we awed at a person who was riding a jet ski. We played for an hour and then ate our lunch. Eating on the beach was twice as delicious eating at home. We spread out our food which we each prepared at home. It was a feast. We ate

fully, and we also ate snacks as we talked for 30 minutes. Then we went back into the seawater. It was really cold because we just got out. My lips were shivering. After five minutes, it wasn't cold again. After we played for a while, we were getting sick of playing.

"Hey. We should go ride on ba-bo!"

"Shall we? I am getting a bit bored."

"Let's do that."

We got out from the water, and we talked to our mothers to get money. We got money, and went to the banana boat. There were a lot of people. It was finally our turn after waiting for 15 minutes. We wore a life vest, and got on the banana boat. My heart was going to burst because of happiness.

We finally got on the banana boat again. All three of us shouted "Wow" simultaneously, and it started. The speed was so fast. We were endlessly screaming joyfully as the water was splashing and a cool wind was hitting us. Still one part of my mind feared falling down. I tend to get nervous when I get so happy. Just as I expected, when our boat was turning around to go back to the shore from the middle of the sea, the banana boat tilted a bit and then we all fell to the water. When I was falling down, I felt dizzy and thrilled at the same time. We went too far way, remembering that Kook Il can't swim made me scared. Thinking that I am going to die as I was floundering, I didn't forget to look for Kook Il. I could feel that my leg was gradually losing strength, but I could barely hold Kook Il. When I held Kook Il's hand, on the other side Jun Gal was holding him already. After holding Kook Il's hand from both sides, we felt relieved. We were all floating thanks to the life vests. Somehow, I felt shy. It seems that they felt the same. As three of us grinned, we grasped each other so that we wouldn't go farther. That moment, all three of us felt a touching in our deep hearts. Just like the sea's sound.

A guy who was riding the banana boat came out and asked if anyone got hurt. As we told him that nothing happened, he got us on the boat again and rode one more round for service. At that time, no one fell down. After we

arrived at the beach, when we got off the banana boat, our hands which were holding the handles felt tingly.

We didn't want to fall down again.

"Wow, wasn't that so fun?" Jun Gal said.

"Yes, it was perfectly trilling."

We looked at each other's faces, and smiled as only we would know. And we went back to our spot where our mothers were. It was already five o'clock and our mothers said "let's go." We were regretful, but three of us were hungry and tired.

"Then, we are now going to eat?"

"Yes, let's go eat sashimi."

"Hooray!"

Three of us shouted again. We have the same taste, we all like sashimi.

Under the beach parasol, we arranged our stuff, cleaned up the garbage, and we headed to the shower room. We took a shower with cold water in the shower room. The heat of our bodies cooled down, but it seemed that happiness in our heart didn't cool down. We took our stuff, and got in the car again. I fell asleep because of tiredness. I felt like I only slept for a couple of minutes, but they woke me up saying that we are already at the sushi restaurant.

"Are we here already?"

"Yes, get out quickly."

I wanted to sleep more, but I was very hungry, so I got out of the car fast then headed to the sushi restaurant. This restaurant was famous for fresh sashimi and was packed with a lot of people. As soon as we sat down, we ordered sashimi. As my stomach was rumbling I was awaking from sleep. So I dipped sashimi into spicy sauce and frantically put it in my mouth.

Chewing, the flavor was so tasty. After waking fully from my half sleep, I got my usual appetite back. After the sashimi, a spicy fish stew and rice were served. A spicy fish stew smell made me drool all over again. I had soup, and the spicy taste was so amazing. I put rice into the soup and had two

bowls of rice. After eating that, I was about to bloat. And there was nothing I wanted.

“Ah…! I had a good meal.”

“Me, too”

As soon as we finished our meal, we got in the car. I was on a full stomach, so I felt sleepy again. Because of a pouring drowsiness, I couldn't even greet people properly when they got out of the car. Our greeting was either a funny joke or wondering how we can live and joke. Even though we didn't make any of those promises today, strangely I didn't feel any disappointment at all. Maybe in the sea, we felt each other's inner feelings. In the future even if we are separated, we might feel that we are together. When I thought about that, I thought that I am a good guy beside my friends.

As I entered the front door, I was falling sleep again. But I took a shower with hot water because of my aunt's nagging. With a fresh body, I lied down in my bed, and to feel the comfort of my bed I stretched widely. And then I fell into a deep sleep. Even a sound sleep's dream was joyful. The dream was entwined with the entire sea, friends, laughing, and etc. At dawn, I woke up to take a piss. Murmuring sounds were coming from the living room. I think that grandmother is here. She lives close so she comes here almost every day. But what is she doing here in the early morning? That was none of my business, but since my room had no a washroom, I had to go to the living room. In the living room, as I thought there was a grandmother. I hardly greeted her, and ran to the washroom to take a piss. And then I came back to my room.

6. Another family

When I came back to my room, I involuntarily left the door slightly opened about one centimeter. Why did I think about eavesdropping on a conversation between my aunt and grandmother? Because as soon as they saw me their faces turned stiff, and they stopped talking, I thought that they might

be talking about me until then. It sure isn't a good habit to overhear other's conversations. When I thought about eavesdropping, my sweet dream ran away. As their conversation continued, my heart was beating. I was about to cry, and I felt like vomiting the food which I ate during the day.

They thought I was sleeping, so they raised their voice. It was still not 11 o'clock when I looked at the watch. It couldn't be 11 a.m, so it was today's evening which wasn't tomorrow yet. Normally, I would be happy that I have plenty time to sleep, but I wasn't today. I couldn't go back to sleep again. Even though I heard my grandmother leaving the house, my aunt was turning off the living room light as she went to her room, I couldn't go back to sleep.

They were discussing what to do with me during the summer vacation which is only a few days away. Because I became a fifth grader, I had to rouse myself and focus on my studying. I knew that they were worried about me for this reason. I made up my mind to spend my summer vacation differently than last one, perhaps just act like I was spending it differently. But I didn't know that my problem became very serious.

They wanted to send me to America where my father was, and learn English abroad for about one or two months or even one year. It wasn't a new thing. When my father was rarely calling me, he asked me to come to American to study English, and he also said that to my aunt. My aunt told me that many kids go to America to study English without any relatives last year, but my father did not take me to America for the sake of me. From my father's voice, and my aunt's attitude who conveyed his message, I felt that he was only just pretending to do a father's duty verbally. It made me feel like a bad boy.

But this time was different. It wasn't something that can be ignored. I was shocked not because of my problem, but because of Jun Gal and Kook Il. According to my aunt, this summer Jun Gal is going to Canada where his uncle lives to study English, and Kook Il was going to enter the English village from his grandparent's house in Seoul. My aunt didn't want to send me to America

to study English until now. But she was aggressive about sending me to American, because it seems that she might have felt pity for me that I would be a loner while my friends are away in Canada and Seoul.

That was it. I was shocked, I felt like vomiting and I was about to cry. It was not because I was happy or worried about this. It was because of my friends. If my aunt knew about this, my friend must have heard about this too. We all went to the same English academy. Moving to a better academy after we went to the upper grades, the academy lesson went too far, thinking that it might have a bad effect on our school grades, we decided to take a short break. Everything has been eye to eye between us and our mothers.

Nevertheless, why didn't they say anything about this not even a one word. Presumably, it is because they might have felt sorry to see me being alone in the city. I was shocked that they treated me with sympathy not with friendship. I felt angry and unfair about that. I couldn't sleep thinking about revenge. I didn't know that a night lasted this long.

The next day at school, I couldn't treat Kook Il and Jun Gal like I used to. When they saw my sullen look, Jun Gal asked me if I was sick and Kook Il asked me if I had eaten anything wrong. They spoke for fun, but it seems that they couldn't guess that my heart was really hurting.

That day, when I came back home, my grandmother was at my home again. From the way they greeted me, I noticed that they were formally going to ask my opinion. I wanted to get over with this issue without being too serious about it.

“Grandmother, aunt, I want to go America to study English. I want to do it too. My father lives there, so it won't cost a lot of money to do it. Why are you surprised? I overheard your conversation last night. You said that my friends are leaving here to study English during the summer. When I pestered you to buy me a cellular phone, you said that if my friends buy it then you would buy it for me too. They are going, so I am going too.”

After hearing about the cell phone, my aunt's stiff look turned relieved

as she thought it was stunning. But my grandmother was still mad.

“Didn’t I tell you? Now he is looking for his father. What did I tell you? Didn’t I tell you that you should get married when you had chances? Not to worry about him. This is the world that people abandon their own child. How can you trust a nephew? You are foolish. It would be a different story if he had no one to take care of him. I told you that I would raise him, so I told you not to worry about him. Even when I count the degrees of kinship, I am closer than you. They have the same bloodline. They are father and son. What are you going to do if they say that I can’t send him or I am not going back?”

Grandmother’s saliva spattered as she got mad. I never thought about a case in which I wouldn’t come back from America. I don’t think that I and my father would grow attached to each other. But I never thought about living without my aunt. But she couldn’t get married because of me. If that happens again, the matter would be changed again.

I overlooked this and got angry like when there is a difficult question that I don’t understand. As I got upset, my old bad habit relapsed. When I was young, I often carelessly sat on the ground. And I cried and struggled. I wanted to do it, but I held back squirming, and I just cried out loud. I have not cried out loud in years. My grandmother was more surprised than my aunt as she hugged me. She said that she was sorry and she was about to cry, too. The old people get fooled so easily. I felt that I deceived my grandmother by acting very sad though I wasn’t. My aunt told my grandmother to go home. After she looked back at me with tearful eyes, she went home obediently. After she went back, my aunt talked about her story that I didn’t know. I wondered about before I asked her.

“Don’t I have a high standard when I choose a spouse, and forgetting my situation?”

I know that she meant her limp by saying forgetting her situation. So, arranged dates and a marriage didn’t go well. I heard that she almost got married when I was seven. Actually, it wasn’t matchmaking. She became fond of a single father

who sent his daughter to my aunt's art academy. They had a date, and he declared his love. He was a good guy, so my aunt wouldn't want to let him go. It would be her first and his second marriage. Calculating that she has a limp and he has a daughter, it was balanced. Finally, that guy proposed to her, and his speech was that my aunt would become a good mother for his daughter. My aunt loved his daughter and she already made up her mind. She gladly accepted his proposal and said that she wanted live together with the nephew too. After hearing that, he changed his attitude completely, saying that it doesn't make sense, and he turned his back on her.

“Bok Dong, you don't have to be sorry about that. I didn't really mean it when I said that I would take you after I got married. Even if I wanted to take you, your grandmother wouldn't let me. I thought that he would gladly accept it. Even if I didn't take you, I hoped to live near your grandmother's house so that I could always watch you, and raise you. I said it wishing that we could live like one family, including him. That absolute attitude made me change my mind. Why didn't I hold him? Boy, when his personality was exposed, I fell out of love with that guy. I am glad that you have grown up enough to have these kinds of conversation. In the future, even if I have someone who I love, you are an adult who wouldn't be a burden. So what I want to say is...”

And then she beat around the bush for a moment, and she talked about a situation in America where my father lives with his family. Even in America, my father couldn't settle his mind for a while, and then he got remarried with a Filipino a few years ago. When they were remarried, she also had a son who was about four years old. By now, he might be around eight years old, and their new daughter would be about two to three years old. He just settled his mind and is now living with a good spouse. So, don't expect that they are living in affluence. Still, I know that your father is a really good person who loved my sister so much. I still believe he does it now, too. According to a rumor, I heard that your father is treating the son very well. If you go to

America, don't be jealous of him and don't compare who your father loves more. Your father wanted to do things for his other son that he couldn't do for you. He always wanted you to come to America but was reluctant because of that boy. Your father just settled his mind and didn't want to go through a hard time again. Having this kind of conversation with my aunt, it looked like going to America had been decided.

What kind of kid am I? I wasn't curious about what kind of family he had in America. The important thing for me was that I was leaving for America at the same time as Jun Gal and Kook Il were leaving to learn English. If I am still disappointed in my friends, do I have a narrow mind?

7. Denis

Because I started the procedure late, I could not get on a flight to America until long after Jun Gal and Kook Il had left our hometown after the summer vacation began. As I left late, I will come back much later than my friends. I don't even have the slightest intention to live at my father's house for good like my grandmother worries. But I made up my mind to stay there until my English got much better than Jun Gal or Kook Il. For all I know, there is a possibility, because I am not just going for a language study abroad, I am going to stay with my father, who has a permanent residence. I acted proudly as if my friends were beside me.

Since I am a boy who likes to eat by nature, I ate the airplane food deliciously as well. When the airplane was dark and silent, I slept like a baby, thinking that it was a night. When the light turned on and people were making a noise, I woke up thinking that it is time to eat and ate everything that they gave me. My aunt worried about me getting on a plane alone, but I wanted to show that I acted like an employee from an enormous corporation who was fed up with overseas trips. After a long 11-hour trip alone, I got off the plane. I wanted to go outside fast wondering what America was like. I didn't feel any anxiety or curiosity about meeting my father for the first time and what this

family was like. After I had gone through the entry procedure, the first thing that caught my eye was a huge placard with my name on it. There was “welcome” in English and my name in Korean on the huge placard. I instantly noticed my father and my new mother who were holding a placard at both sides. I was also wearing a name tag that aunt made for me.

“You are Bok Dong.”

My father threw his arms around me. Because I already had grown up or my father was tall, my father’s chest and my chest almost met and I could put my face on his shoulder. Over his shoulder, I could see his new family. My stepmother was rolling the placard and a boy about 6 or 7 years old was holding the hand of a girl dressed like a Barbie Doll. He was looking at me. I instantly pushed my father’s chest because I felt that he was staring rather than looking. I also was going to say I was happy to meet you but I just smiled. Next, it was my and the boy’s turn to greet. I thought about hugging him friendly but it seemed that I shouldn’t do that because his vigilant staring weighed on my mind. A word immaturity which grown-ups use popped in my mind. So with a smile I said “You are Denis, nice to meet you”, and then offered my hand but that guy pulled his hand behind his back. The stepmother said something to him and held his hand so I could hold it. I cautiously held the tiny hand and he immediately pulled back his hand. Instantly, I could feel that guy detests me.

My father’s car was a Sonata, which is a Korean brand car. I like imported cars so I was disappointed at him for driving a Korean car in America. I thought grown-ups saying that everybody becomes a patriot when they go abroad. I thought maybe he bought a Korean car for that reason. My father made my stepmother drive and fastened up a little girl in a car seat and he held the big guy on his lap. My father was soothing Denis as he spoke to me sparingly. It seemed like that my father was soothing that guy’s discomforted mood. His attitude looked so tender and kind. From that, I knew that he was a good person. Though this was not a real son, I could felt that

my father was nice to him, before I came here. As my aunt persuaded me not to get jealous, I didn't feel any jealousy. I never loved father, so why should I be jealous. I felt sorry for him. To make him feel relieved, I acted like I didn't care about their closeness and I diverted my attention to the outside view. For my busy father, who was flattering that guy, my indifference may be more comfortable. A row of palm trees were standing in the dry and hot weather. There were many sports cars which I like. It was so amazing to see people who had blond hair, blue eyes, and curly hair with a black skin. I saw them only on T.V. Our car went on a freeway. On the way, I enjoyed watching so many sports cars. The habit of paying no attention to his family continued until I went to school. My stepmother and my father were too busy running a store to pay attention to us. And that helped, too.

Denis was still hostile and vigilant to me but, luckily my little younger sister, Aries, liked me. Maybe it is because she was too young or we have the same blood. Even Aries couldn't understand Korean but she soon understood a piggyback ride and liked to ride on my back. I was glad that Aries was there. I could feel that I was a part of the family through Aries. It was a place where I couldn't stay for a long time. I had a determination that I wanted go back later than Kook Il and Jun Gal and wanting to learn much more English than them. With that thought in mind, I was doing well.

8. An American school

A few weeks later, I went to take a test to enter school. That time, because I was very poor at English, I was scared and nervous. My turn had come so I went to the room. It was my first time speaking to an American so I didn't know what to say. That person asked me various questions and I answered with difficulty. At last he asked me, "When is your birthday?" That moment, I couldn't think about anything but that my birthday is October 18th. So I said "ten eighteen". With a smile he uttered "Your birthday is October eighteenth?" Instantly, I was like gosh but it was irrevocable. I smiled

generously as the teacher knew my shy and unfair feeling.

Time passed and I finally went to an American school. Different than what I had imagined, the school didn't have many floors; it had a big room for each class. Unlike Korean school which has a hallway, there was the playground if you go outside. There was a very wide grass field at the back. I went to the ELD class. This classroom consisted of kids who weren't good at English yet. I was very nervous when I entered the classroom. Then I was startled. There were approximately 20 students and about 15 of them were Korean kids. And all of them were girls. I disliked that there were no boys. So during the break, I hung around with kids from another class speaking in Korean, avoiding the teacher. One fun game to play in America is a handball. It is not a handball with two nets. You're supposed to hit a ball to a wall and you loose if you bounce the ball more than once. I wasn't good at first. But later, I became so good at it, I could beat the all kids in my class.

For the first few days, I brought lunch to school. School lunch looked delicious so I decided to try it. When I got cafeteria food, I could take things that I wanted while holding a paper tray. Pizza was served on the first day when I went there. I was very happy, so I took a piece of pizza and other food. By then, I had no friends to eat with during lunch. After some time, another boy of the same age came to my class. His name was David Park and for convenience, I had a name William Kim. His Korean name was Park Do Oak. I felt good when calling his Korean name. He planned to stay for now in a neighboring house where they knew my stepmother well. From the first day, we hung out too much so my father was getting worried that I would have no time to learn English. I didn't care what my father thought; David and I became closer to each other. Later, we went to a swimming pool and I slept over at his house. I may have liked my friend more than my family. After I became friendly with him, not fitting in at my father's house wasn't painful at all. One day, my school had a festival. We went to a park located near school. We made bubbles, threw a Frisbee, and played various games. That day, I played with

my friends for a whole day and ate something, so I felt really good. Also, it was totally feeling good to hang out while speaking English. I thought to myself “Ah, my English has improved a lot.”

As my English had improved, my father came to school to talk with a teacher. He decided to send me to a normal school. On the last day of school, in our class room, we put our hands on plaster and carved our name in it. We took a picture with a teacher. That day, my teacher ate food and played with us.

9. A new school

The new school's name was New Fort Christian School. It was a Christian school. Unlike other schools, it had a school uniform because it was a private school. I heard that it's expensive too. Telling me about the cost meant I had to study English more diligently, and it may also have been a confession that he actually wanted to be a good father for the first time. I didn't have any intention of staying with my father for a long time. I wasn't sorry and I wasn't worried about spending a lot of money. I was astounded to hear that he was going to spend a lot of money on me for the first time. When I was in Korea, I lived with my aunt without my parents.

Even though I didn't have good parents who were very rich, I lived doing everything I wanted, compared to Jun Gal or Kook Il who are middle class. I didn't feel inferior at all. On the contrary, my aunt wanted me to do more extracurricular work than my friends. Although I spent more money than them, she wanted to give me abundantly. Then, she said that my father was sending her enough child rearing expense monthly from America. To think of it now, she might have done it because she didn't want me to be discouraged.

Not knowing that, when she was too busy to take care of me sometimes, I used to complain inwardly that she should be nicer to me. For I thought that she was just living with my child rearing expenses. Of course, I only said it inwardly.

That day, I figured out when she would be at home. I phoned to inform her that I had finished ELD, and I was going to a normal school. So far, though I often talked to her on the phone, it was my first time that I made a phone call. I said that I loved her, I missed her, something which I had never said. My grandmother was at my aunt's house so I could hear that she was pestering my aunt for the phone.

"Oh, my baby, my sweet, you already graduated and you went to a better school? Why don't you come to see me if you finished your school? Why did you go to a better school? Are you going to come back after you get doctor's degree? I am about to cry, because I miss you."

And then, she couldn't finish her sentence and I could really hear her crying. I also choked up, and I felt like my heart was blistering. I felt that way, because I was happy. Although she scolded me many times, I knew that she was just saying it. I knew that she loved me a lot inwardly, but I didn't know that she missed me that much.

According to a new school's rule, I went to school by car wearing suit pants, a dress shirt, and a cheliform necktie. I thought to myself that I finally finished ELF and am going to a normal school. I got off the car with half nervousness and half expectation. That school wasn't as big as I had imagined. The number of student was only about 100 when I counted them.

Still, I was happy. One thing that made me unhappy was that I was the only Korean there. I thought about the early days in ELD. Instantly, I had scary thoughts. The scary thoughts were of having no friends to eat lunch with, and having no boys at school. It was a feeling of alienation. Absolutely, I thought to myself not this time.

The next day at school I was nervous. Kids greeted each other, and I also greeted them. I got very excited by this greeting. In school, my best friend's name was Ben, whose father was the principal of this school. I also pal around with Kent and Adam. Our homeroom teacher was very nice. A peculiar thing about this school was that the teacher said "Adult!" and we had to get up

when other teachers walked in during the class. When that teacher said it was ok to sit down, we sat down again.

There were two breaks in school. We took 15 minutes for each break. During the break, we went to the schoolyard to play with a ball that was on the ground.

When a teacher exclaimed “Snack bar” at recess, we simultaneously ran to the teacher. We waited in front of a room, and we bought something to eat. It was a kind of cafeteria, but we couldn’t go anytime we wanted. We attended worship once a week. All students entered one building, and then we would listen to the principal’s sermon and one teacher’s explanation and came back.

As I went to school like this, I started to meet friends from my neighborhood. The first person whom I met while I was riding on skateboard was Chinese. At first, I was very delighted, because I thought that he was Korean. But he wasn’t. He asked me to ride a skateboard together. I got scared and refused him because I wasn’t good at English. Nonetheless, we ran into each other often, so we finally became friends. I made two other friends besides him. Though I can’t recall his name, one guy was short and white with blue eyes and blond hair. The other guy was black with curly hair. They rode skateboards, bikes, and almost anything on a professional level. They took it as very natural. I was amazed, because I had never seen anything like that in Korea. I thought to myself “That is impossible, how do they do that? Did they spend all their time practicing those techniques?” One time, I tried to copy them but I fell down several times and I felt humiliated. I walked around the neighborhood and we played tag which was like ‘hide and seek.’

A person who lived next door had two dogs. One was a golden retriever and the other was just huge black dog. They both were very docile, so I sometimes played with those two dogs. The people who lived next door were kind to us, and the dogs were also welcoming to us. Frankly, I have never seen a big dog, so I was scared at first. But as I played with them, I quickly became attached to them. It was because they were very docile dogs but also I

didn't have to be nervous trying to understand English.

10. A new experience

It seems like my father was making more opportunities to go traveling. He may want me to see many wonderful things, but I knew that he wanted me to become friendly with his family. But, just like Denis was cautious about me, I also thought that his family was his, not mine. America was a tremendous country.

I saw many marvelous things as I traveled from place to place. There was a hot desert where the temperature was about 40 degrees. The other place was cold and it was snowing a lot, so I couldn't see ahead. On the trip, it seemed that America had many different climates. More than anything, I was happy that I could see wild animals with my own eyes. I was so delighted to see a deer, so I pretended that I knew the deer by making a big sound. I also saw squirrels and similar animals up close. It seemed the animals weren't scared of people.

One thing I remember is the amusement parks. Especially, Disney Land was so large and there were lots of rides. Many Disney characters such as Mickey Mouse and Mini Mouse were walking around in Disney Land. Unlike Korea, Disney Land had a regular line and a fast pass line. At the fast line, we could buy a ticket from a machine so that we could get on a ride faster. Every time our family rode on a ride, we bought the fast pass and waited in line. So, we were able to take many rides. The other was the sea world. There were rides based on sea animal themes. Dolphins, seals, and other sea animals came out to do performances. As soon as our family went to the amusement park, we went to the place where we could touch dolphins. Denis and I kept close to the grass and we tried to touch the dolphins, but it was no use. It transpired this way because other people were feeding the dolphins from the other side. We quickly nagged our parents and bought food. The result came out quickly. When I shook the food in the water, the dolphin came to me and ate the food. When I

touched the dolphin, it didn't feel as slippery as I thought it would. It felt just like touching wet rubber that was just taken out of water. However, maybe because of my imagination, it was amazing, too.

Our family went to see the killer whales perform, and our front row chairs had a different color. Later, I found out that it was a spot where water would splash. My father and my stepmother were reluctant to sit in the front row, but I thought that it would be fun, so I sat down in the front row just like the other kids. The performance started, and the whale splashed water weakly. I sat a bit to the rear of the front row, so not even a drop of water hit me. I moved one row forward with inconvenience and at that moment the whale came out from the water and went back in the water, so I got all wet. After that, I went back to the place where my family was. When the performance was almost over, my stepmother knew that I would get wet, so she helped me change into other clothes that she had brought. However, I got on the other rides without fatigue. There was a wrecked ship that was like a haunted house. At first, I was very nervous when I entered the ship, but it wasn't that scary. In the ship, there was a ridiculous ghost drawing near the window. I was surprised by one thing; a ghost who was wearing luminous clothing opened a window with a banging sound and screamed. I was surprised, but my stepmother was screaming. With a smile, I said that it wasn't that scary.

My stepmother said "People who work at a place like this will like it if you get scared and scream." I thought that my stepmother was a kind person.

The Lego Land was impressive, too. All the rides were related to Legos. The well-known buildings that were made with Legos were great. If the photographs were taken well, there would be a no difference compared to the real buildings.

At last, I couldn't forget about a small amusement park which was adjacent to my neighborhood. It wasn't that great, but I liked the fact that it was close to my neighborhood. It didn't even take a few minutes by foot. My favorite ride was Kart. At first, I wasn't tall enough to ride it, so I just hung

around at the arcade. Finally, when I was tall enough to ride it, I rode it. I felt purely amazed when I got in the kart. At the beginning, I stepped on the gas very hard. The speed of the kart was faster than I thought. I tried not to bump other people's while driving fast. At the amusement park, there was rock-climbing, too. There were two chances for one ticket. On my first try I failed, but on my second try I was almost successful. I climbed up to the top, there was the button that I was supposed to push, but my arm was one centimeter short. I was at the top for a few minutes, but I couldn't press the button, and I came down. I felt frustrated.

I liked to play and I found that there were kids who were playing after school.

Those kids' parents came late to school. I thought that it would be fun to hang around with them, so I nagged my father so that I could stay with them. As I stayed at school longer, I became closer with my friends. We connected our Gameboys and played games. When my father and my stepmother came to pick me up, I didn't want to go home. But I didn't show it. School life in America was so much fun. It was easy to become close with the teachers. Class wasn't tedious because we were all cheerful. Even in this kind of school, I couldn't avoid a test. I studied as I got scolded by my father, and the hardest subject was American history which I never learned.

I memorized, memorized, and memorized the handout covering the main points that a teacher gave me. On the day of the test, I was nervous while taking the test. The first period was a science. I was trying to think out what I had memorized, and I wrote down the bird's name and about insects. American history was too hard for me, but I did my best. Therefore, the test result wasn't too bad. I can't remember the result of American history class. I can remember the result of science because I did pretty well. I got 95 points. I got a compliment from my father, my stepmother, and my teacher. I felt so good.

I was enjoying life in America in my way, such as playing with my friends, and adapting myself to school life. But there was no progress adapting myself to my father's family. Denis was still vigilant toward me and he rejected

me just like the first day. He became depressed and his face became haggard. When I could understand my stepmother's and father's worrying sounds I knew that they weren't like this before. Maybe it was because I cut into this family. To make him feel relieved, I didn't fit in when my family went out. I also acted carelessly towards my father. I wanted him to know that I am just a guest. When I phoned to Jun Gal or Kook Il, I deliberately shouted the last greeting in English. I wanted him to be relieved by saying that I am going back soon, and what my friends wanted for presents. I was not sulky to my friends anymore. If I didn't have fun talking with my friends in Korean, it would have been hard to stand the pain that I wasn't harmonizing with my family. It was fun to see that my English was getting better, and I was procrastinating adapting to this family.

11. The father's room

I knew that due to the lack of my effort, I wasn't adapting to this family. Frankly, I wanted be closer with my father. I was aware of Denis, so I lived keeping a distance fairly like a guest, but it started to get awkward and choking just like wearing a mask. I felt shame and unfair for having no chance to be with only father. At first, I thought that I was deliberately avoiding that chance.

I gradually started to feel that this family planned not to give me a chance to be with my father. With my stepmother's permission, I studied and played games until late at Do Oak's house which was in the neighborhood. One day I came back home and everybody was sleeping. For a family member coming home late, the front door near the road was locked, but left opened the living room that was facing the garden. I knew that, so I went to the backyard. In the living room, there was a low light lamp which we would turn on when a member of the family didn't come home. It was shining dimly. I was relieved and breathing. Then I looked at the house which I got used to in the meantime. I found something peculiar. On the roof, there were two windows with a

triangle design like that of a bird house on both sides. I could see the light from one window. It was a two-story house and the family's bedrooms were all on the second floor. On the corner of the second floor, there were stairs, so I knew that there was one more floor up there. When I first came here, my stepmother showed me through the house. But she just told me that it was an attic and didn't show me. My stepmother barely spoke Korean but told me this in Korean, so I thought that was an English word that I didn't know. And I remember that my father interpreted with a smile to me that it was an attic.

And then I have never thought about that place. I thought that an attic is an unusable space. On the ascending stairs, the passage was filled with a bunch of clutter which normally would be put in a shed, so there was no space. Until now it was an uninteresting place, so I wondered why my father was in there.

That thought made my heart palpitate, just like breaking in to a house to steal. I walked in cautiously taking soft breaths. I put down my backpack in my second-floor room, and I went to the stairs which lead to the attic. On the ceiling of the landing, dim lights were turned on. Things were recklessly stacked, but there was a path which people could barely use. In case, I made a sound by mistakenly touching thing, I muted my sounds like an alley cat. And step by step I went up to the attic.

At the end of the attic, the light was coming out from the door in a straight line. It was opened when I pushed it quietly. Inside the room, my father was there alone. He deeply sat on the couch and he was watching a Korean drama. It was written by Kim Su Hyun, who my aunt and my grandmother liked. He glanced at me and then he was absorbed watching the screen. The side of his face looked forlorn and lonely.

As I stood there, my father beckoned with his hand to come and sit down. Beside his single sofa, there were only two slanted uncomfortable looking wooden chairs. So there were no spaces. I thought about sitting on his single sofa naturally, but I wasn't confident enough to act friendly. Instead, I

approached him from behind and I hugged his shoulder. Like when I embraced my grandmother from behind, I could touch his skinny and small shoulder. I felt a bit bitter. I had never felt this before. As he touched my clasped hand in front of his chest, he muttered that I had grown up. I pulled out my hand and I started to massage his shoulder. I gave a shoulder massage to my aunt and grandmother. So I roughly knew where the muscles were cramped up, and where to massage with effort to relax them. I did my best to relax his muscles. I massaged him for a long time as if he were my grandmother. My grandmother always had said it is so relaxing, my puppy, and your hands will cramp.

But there were no responses from my father. On the screen, a big family who sat on a huge table was eating a meal. They were having small-talk without knowing where the food was going. My father was into dramas as he wasn't aware of me. Finally, my father pulled my hand back and as he held my hand, he said thank you. I thought about saying how could you say that to your son, but it might sound too mature, so I kept silent. Grandmother would say my puppy and then money would come, but my father kept watching the drama. Watching a drama is so important that he doesn't want to be bothered. I thought like this but I wasn't disappointed. If I didn't have fun talking with Jun Gal and Kook Il in Korean, I would have gone through such a hardship living here.

I whispered with a small voice that I will go to sleep. Then I got out from the attic. I couldn't hear what father said from behind. It may have been "sleep well." A moment ago, I didn't massage his knotted muscles, it was the lump in my heart and I felt better. Now, I would have no regrets leaving his house at anytime.

12. The family that I need

One day, a guest came to our school. It was time to listen to a good story from a famous guest from this town. The last famous figure who came

was a well-known baseball player, but it was my first time hearing his name. I thought that he had a talent for humor rather than baseball. Every time he finished his sentences, students were shouting and laughing. But I didn't understand what he was talking about. I got more upset for losing confidence in my English than unable to understand him. But this time, a famous figure made me want to call him an uncle or grandfather.

He was an Asian guy who had a friendly face. Before the lecture, the principal gave us an introduction. A Brown doctor developed a medication for a rare disease, and it gave hopes to children. After making a lot of money, he donated generously to children who were suffering from disease and poverty in poor countries. Therefore, he was a respected medical doctor not only in our hometown but also worldwide.

He went up onto the platform, and he said that the principal missed telling us something. It was that he was a Korean who was adopted by an American family 50 years ago. It seemed that children were looking back to see me, and I got goose bumps on my back with a strange feeling. He couldn't speak Korean because he was adopted 50 years ago. But as he was aware of me, he spoke slowly using simple words. Of course, I couldn't understand all. His speech was like this as following what I had heard.

“This actually happened in the Korean war”

I hated when my grandmother brought up the Korean war story. I never thought that I would hear her miserable story again in America. I worried that American kids would look down on me when a very poor kid story came up. I couldn't contain my sympathy. Whether I liked it or not his story had started.

“It was a very cold winter during the war and the U.N force's situation was unfavorable, so they were retreating. In the middle of an empty country field, there was a pregnant mother who was just about to give birth. She was looking for a house to give birth. The village was empty because everybody fled. No one knew why she couldn't flee or which house she was looking for. She started to feel pain on the street before she arrived at the house. She had

nothing and sat under a bridge, and she gave birth. The Korean winter is unimaginably harsh compared to that of California, which is warm all year round.

Without anyone's help, she gave birth alone, and she took care of everything. Then, she took off all off her clothes and covered her baby so that the baby wouldn't be cold. Soon, the mother froze to death.

Before long, an American general was also fleeing in a car. He was passing by and ran out of gas. After contacting his army, he got out and was waiting nearby. But suddenly, he could hear a strange baby crying from somewhere. Surprised, the soldier followed that sound under the bridge, and he witnessed a stunning scene. The mother was frozen to death, and a newborn baby was intensely crying. He was rolled up in many layers of his mother's clothes.

The soldier thought that it was god's will that the gas ran out here. So he covered the baby with an army blanket and his parka and he got back in the car. With the soldiers who came to supply gas, he dressed the mother and buried her at a nearby hill on a sunny spot. After that, the general put the baby in an orphanage until the truce was signed. He took the baby to his country, and he reared the baby with his family.

But as the kid grew he recognized that he had a different skin color compared to the other children, and he became depressed. The fact that he was abandoned and adopted from an orphanage cast a shadow on his personality. He couldn't accept his family's interest or love. He secretly harassed his new born sister who was getting all of the family's love. The dog was kind to him, so they slept together. But he abruptly mistreated his dog and made it scream. Thinking that no one welcomes or loves him in this world, he couldn't love anything in the world. Even to his step father he said sarcastically. "I know why you adopted me, you just wanted to be respected and show that you are doing a good thing." Hearing this, the step father finally decided to tell him a truth and they took a plane to Korea. The stepfather intentionally chose to come

in January, the coldest month in Korea.

'My foster father, who had different skin color, and I visited my mother's grave.' During the trip, he found out about his mother, and he burst into tears in front of the grave. He took off his clothes and covered grave with them. He said "Mother, Mother, How cold were you? You sacrificed yourself to save me. Mother. As you guys already guessed, the baby who was born with a huge love is me. Of course, after that I have changed."

It can't be the same life thinking why have I been born in this world and I am happy to be born in this world. The first one is resentment and the latter one is appreciation. As Dr. Brown's speech was over, everybody broke into applause.

It seemed quieter than when baseball player came. There were no shouts or cheers, but the kid's eyes next to me were filled with tears. That kid asked me if I cried. Were my eye's filled with tears, too? How can I not cry, I was born with the sacrifice of my mother, too. A few days later, I phoned my aunt to Korea, and I discussed my family here. I decided on the returning date to Korea. Even though I could feel from her voice how much she liked me and waited for me, she asked me to stay here longer. Ah, she was kind of a fool. So with a sulky voice I said "I need you aunt, don't you need me?" She couldn't say anything and then she said between her tears.

"Your grandmother is beside me. Can you repeat what you just had said to her? Good boy."

She thought of me as a kid and she wanted me to act cute one more time. My grandmother didn't give me a chance to repeat myself. She said my puppy, my sweet heart, and it came all the way from a far-away country where love overflows.

My father came to school to announce that I was going back to Korea and I told that to my friends. They were astonished when I told them. The teacher looked sad too. The teacher asked me to come up front and say good-bye to my friends. I called my friends' name one by one, and I told them

a story of when they were kind. I told them that the story of Dr. Brown was the most memorable. I thanked them and said that I was lucky to go to this school.

The last day of the school, my teacher called me to teachers' room. He said that I might need it, and he put some kind of document into the envelope. He complimented me saying that I was a good student. After I stayed about 20 minutes, I immediately ran to the classroom. As soon as I opened the door, my friends gave me hand-made cards as they were saying 'go back to Korea safely'. The teacher gave me a card, too. I was so thankful. I felt that I didn't want to go back to Korea alone, and I wanted live in America. I told them that I am thankful. I read all the cards, and I won't forget them forever.

Just like when I arrived at the airport, my family said farewell to me. I hugged them one by one and I hugged Denis last. I was happy that he stood still, and he didn't push me back. After he becomes older, when we meet again, he and I might become good friends and family. By then he may think that he is happy to be born in this world.

The End

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