

A Chair

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Over the years, I have made a lot of furniture.

I enjoy making dining tables the most. I enjoy imagining the food to be placed on the table or the people sitting facing each other across it, but most of all I like to imagine the dining table at daybreak, existing alone as such, devoid of function or purpose.

When orders came in, I made beds and bookshelves. I also made tables and shelves.

I have twice made chairs. I made my first chair fifteen years ago and I finished my second chair yesterday. Both are chairs for one. I didn't make them to sell or use.

I want to tell you a story from the past.

A story of days when things that had been abandoned and left behind were happening one by one.

About one chair left behind alone after such days.

In January of the year I turned fifteen, Father returned home. For seven years, he had worked to earn money in the Middle East, and Mother saved the money and bought an apartment. Our family's living expenses were covered by Mother's salary. The year after she gave birth to me, Mother began to work in the ticket office at the bus terminal. At that time, our house and my mother's parents' house were about a ten-minute walk away from each other. I was raised by my maternal grandmother.

My maternal grandmother lived for 95 years, 6 months and 12 days and she departed this life 15 years ago. For 29 years and 11 months out of those 95 years, 6 months and 12 days, my grandmother and I met every day. No. Let me calculate again. When my aunt gave birth to her child, my maternal grandmother stayed in her house for about three years. And in my early twenties, I served in the Inje 2nd Division for nearly three years. Even if I count those days and subtract them all, my grandmother and I still saw each other and talked, even briefly, every day for over 20 years. Even though we didn't live in the same house. So far, my grandmother has been the only person like that in my life.

My grandmother suddenly grew weaker when she was just over ninety-four. Although she didn't suffer from dementia or serious illness, her digestive and respiratory functions weren't as good as before, and she had great difficulty eating and defecating. For a while before she gave up on life, she stayed in a nursing home, where she kept saying, "I'm not cold, I'm not sick, I know my body, I'm okay, I don't need it," and she refused to take medicine or injections, rejecting other people's care and distressing her children. People said it was just the "usual stubbornness of the elderly." I understood her attitude as cleanness or fastidiousness. At that time, she really wasn't cold, wasn't sick, she really was fine. She really didn't need drugs

or injections. It wasn't my grandmother who was not okay with it, but the people who would remain here below, the people who would remain behind and bid Grandmother farewell and then confront death themselves later, Grandmother's descendants, who felt obliged to judge Grandmother, who was slowly dying of old age, as "not okay."

One day, three or four months after she entered the nursing home, as my grandmother was eating the yellow pumpkin porridge I had brought, she suggested that I should adopt a religion. That way, as the day of my death approached, surely it would be a little less scary, wouldn't it? I remembered Grandmother in my youth saying, "I believe in money," with bright eyes and a chirpy voice. The same grandmother who had said that! At that time, she was selling corn dogs and fish cakes from a stall (I would stop by every day after school to eat corn dogs and get pocket money), and she used to be able to calculate the price of 12 fish cakes, 6 pieces of filefish jerky and 5 corn dogs faster than a calculator.

Now when I wake up, I'm scared. It's even scarier when I try to fall asleep. I wish I'd believed in something in my life.

What do you have to be sacred about, Grandma?

All the time I spent living wrongly is scary.

You raised my older brother and me, didn't you?

Because your mother had you.

You turned the two of us into adults.

I didn't do anything. You just grew up.

You raised two lives, or rather, you had six children, so you raised more than ten people, the two of us and the children of my uncles and aunts. I don't think any wrongdoing can compare to that.

I couldn't raise my own children. I neglected them to make money. Once they could read and write, I made them work.

I only put your uncles through university.

Your mother holds a lot of grudges against me.

I know. I'll make up for that. Because you raised me.

She couldn't even eat half the pumpkin porridge.

You don't believe in heaven or paradise.

It's not that I don't believe, it's just that I don't know.

Most people believe without knowing. But you can't do that.

How can you believe in something you don't know?

So for you there's neither Christian heaven nor Buddhist paradise. So likewise there's neither Christian hell nor the three Buddhist hells. Since they don't exist for you, there's no way you'll ever go there. So don't be afraid.

Grandmother said that made sense, and laughed. Still, she murmured, dying is a very scary thing, so I'm afraid to die even after living this long, since I lived in vain.

But if none of those things are waiting for me, what will I have next?

I was sad when she asked me that. I wanted to say that she was my grandmother, she was healthy and she had to live to be one hundred years old, but when she turned one hundred, then what? Even if she lived to be a hundred years old, she only had a few years left. She was bound to die someday. The days of sorrow and pain were sure to come. Live a long and healthy... I couldn't complete the phrase that I had started. She had already lived a long, healthy life. She could no longer wish for more.

You'll just fall asleep, Grandma.

But she needed an answer. I had to give an answer, although I had never died, did not know what death was, and had not properly lived.

It's a matter of living again in a better world, even if it's not Christian heaven or Buddhist paradise.

Grandma looked at me with sad eyes. So every day we prepared ourselves.

Less than a week after returning home, my father started working again. My mother treated him like a guest, and I treated my father like a teacher. Late one March night, in the middle of a belated cold spell, Father came home very drunk. He sat down in the living room and called out to us in a loud voice. I woke up, thinking I was dreaming because I had never experienced anything like that before. I opened the door a little and peered into the living room.

Father was squirming like a young animal and kept rubbing his face with his palms. Mother came out into the living room and stood beside him, quite still, unsure what to do next. Maybe it was an unfamiliar experience for her too? Father reached out a hand and tugged at her. Mother sat down. Father tried to hug her and Mother pushed him away. Father was crying and muttering angrily. This is my house. This is my house bought with my money. Why are you giving me such a hard time? I've been working hard all this time, telling myself that I was protecting my family, but now I wonder what I was protecting. Did I suffer all that just to be treated like this? He kept repeating those words. Father continued to try to hug her and Mother kept pushing him away. I thought I should shut the door, but I kept peeking. My heart was beating fast. They didn't feel like parents. It was like watching a drama. As Father's laments continued, Mother turned off the light in the living room and went back into the bedroom. Father lay down on the floor and I quietly closed the door. I lay down and tossed and turned and fell into a light sleep. When I opened my eyes again, feeling cold, there was a faint light outside the window. I opened the door. Father was lying sprawled on the living room floor like a set of cast-off clothes, and the bedroom door was closed. In the light of dawn, the living room looked faintly blue. It was terribly quiet and cold. The feeling given by that cold, quiet, metallic light that I saw that morning set the tone of our house. On days when he was drunk and on days when he was not drunk, Mother slept in the bedroom while Father slept in the living room. At nights when I couldn't sleep, I would open the door a little and peek out as if I were being naughty.

At that time, I was constantly burdened with a feeling that I was being defeated. Even today, that feeling troubles me, but now I know it's a sense of inferiority. At the time, I didn't know how to name emotions. I just felt dirty, unhappy and angry. And scared, too. I was afraid of something unfathomable, and because I was afraid I felt as if I were all the time making mistakes. I felt that I was being forcibly erased. Maybe I wanted to erase myself. I was a small, skinny, silent child.

It was a spring day when the wind no longer felt cold. I stayed in the corner of the classroom all day and looked out the window from time to time. The other children in the class were noisy and excited that day. I was as still as a stone or as a blade of grass. Even though I was still, I felt as if I were being crushed. After class, I stopped by my grandmother's stall to grab a corn dog and eat it. Grandmother asked if she should give me some pocket money and I shook my head. Children in the same school uniform came rushing toward the stall.

Without saying goodbye, I left the stall and rode my bike in the direction opposite to our house. The bus terminal appeared. I changed direction, passed the market, went under the railroad bridge, and reached the station. The road continued on in a circle, so that if I kept on, I would eventually reach home. I changed direction several times, but I knew the way home, and no matter how hard I pedaled to avoid it, the way home kept showing up. Suddenly, Seok-woo came to mind. We had gone to the same elementary school and were quite close until the first year of middle school, but before we reached our second year, he had moved to a neighboring town. I found a pay phone and dialed Seok-woo's house. Fortunately, he took the

call. I abruptly said that I was going over to his house, and Seok-woo said okay in a grudging kind of voice.

The sun was setting as I rode my bike down the national highway. I sped along for a while longer. Not far off, I could see lights gathered like a cluster of baby's breath. I stopped and with one foot on the pedal and one foot on the ground, I looked at the lights for a long time before turning the bike. I had called as if possessed by something and said I was going over to his house, but the moment I said it, I didn't really think I could do it. And anyway, I didn't even know where Seok-woo's house was, and he didn't ask if I knew where the house was, either. No matter how hard I pedaled, familiar scenery didn't appear, and just as I was starting to feel anxious, the name of the town I lived in appeared on a road sign. I vowed never to contact Seok-woo again.

I arrived near our house and looked at my watch. It was close to midnight. It was the first time I had been out so late. I worried whether my parents would scold me or what kind of an excuse I could make, but I didn't want to go into the house. I cycled along the river and went back into the town. Most of the shops were closed and the roads were dark and deserted. There were few cars and few people, so it was very good for riding a bike.

I passed slowly among the dark shops of the old town. I couldn't see a single stray cat, but a small kid emerged from the entrance of a building. It was a building with several quilt shops. I stopped when she looked around.

It was So-jin. We went to the same middle school, but we weren't friends. We had never spoken. But I knew So-jin, though I wasn't sure if So-jin knew me. She went in between the buildings and hid herself. I pushed the bike and walked slowly toward her. The closer I got to where she was hiding, the more I could smell cigarette smoke. Normally, I would have passed by, pretending not to know her; indeed, I would never have pushed my bike toward the place where So-jin was, but now I stopped where she was hiding. The roads that I had taken on the bike that day, the little freedom that remained in me for a while, seemed to hold my feet. So-jin was surprised to see me and dropped her cigarette. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to surprise you. So-jin gestured for me to be quiet and picked up the dropped cigarette. She resumed smoking the cigarette and I stood there holding the handlebars of the bike. So-jin looked at me with a puzzled expression for a moment, then pulled out a cigarette from the cigarette pack and held it out. I took it and hesitated whether to put it in my mouth or not, just held it between my index and middle fingers.

What are you doing here at this time?

So-jin asked in a low voice.

I'm just... roaming around.

I answered in a low voice.

Your house is far from here.

I was surprised. She knew where I lived? I nodded and with the hand holding the cigarette I wiped under my nose.

But is that your house?

I asked, pointing to the building from where So-jin had emerged. She nodded and pointed at the top floor of the building. While she smoked her cigarette, I stood at a moderate distance from her, holding onto the bike.

Do you have any small change?

So-jin asked. I took some coins out of my pocket and showed her. She said that there was a vending machine nearby and suggested we go get some coffee. So-jin took the lead and I followed. After a short walk, a vending machine appeared. I bought two cups of milk coffee and we went to a wooden bench not very far away. We sat side by side, drank the milk coffee, and So-jin smoked another cigarette.

Isn't this the best time?

So-jin said. I wondered what she meant. Because she said “the best,” that should mean it was good. As I didn’t say anything, So-jin continued.

Around this time, I mean. The breeze, the weather, the temperature, the scents. They’re good but they’re too short-lived. They’re better because they’re short. But trials always come with the good things.

I nodded, but I had never really thought about it. That a certain season is good. I thought I’d seen the expression “around this time” written down; when I saw it written down, I hadn’t realized, but now that I heard it, it was a pretty expression.

We drank the coffee and walked together back to So-jin’s house. She said before entering.

You should go home now. You look a bit tired.

I nodded. Pushing the glass door open, So-jin entered the building. Through the brown glass, I could see her back as she walked up the stairs. My heart was beating very fast. I thought it was because of the coffee. I drank coffee for the first time that day. I put my hand in my pocket and checked that the cigarette So-jin had given me wasn’t broken. I sat on the saddle of the bike, then got off again. I walked along, pushing my bike. I hoped that day would never dawn.

After three years of preparing for the police exam following discharge from the military, I gave up. My parents encouraged me to try one more time, but I wasn’t sure. I didn’t even want to be a cop. After throwing away all the books and looking for work, I got a delivery and transportation job at a nearby lumber mill. Then I fell in love with the smell of wood. After thinking for a long time, I asked the manager: I want to make furniture, but where can I learn that and how? The boss introduced me to a skilled carpenter he knew. I became the carpenter’s assistant.

It was good, the whole process of touching, trimming, and silently creating something. I wanted to become a craftsman. I wanted to be called that by people. The carpenter asked if there was anything I would like to make first. I replied that I had to make a coffin, Grandma’s coffin. At that time, I thought of my grandmother’s death every day. It was painful that I couldn’t think of death and Grandmother separately. Can’t we be together forever? Why can’t it be forever?

The carpenter promised that he would help and that he would find some good wood for me.

Grandmother was delighted.

She said she wouldn’t be afraid lying down in a coffin I made.

She said she felt she would be able to go to a good place if she was in a coffin I had made.

Everyone who came to the wake said it had been a good death. They said that she had died very beautifully and cleanly, and that her children were blessed. People asked how a day could be so lovely, even for autumn, and words saying that she’d died on a day when there was no rain or wind, on a day that was neither hot nor cold, so that the living would not suffer, floated around the funeral home like an endless refrain. I couldn’t stand those words.

My aunts and uncles didn’t cry much. They’d had plenty of time to prepare for her death, and in the meantime, each of them seemed to have put aside their guilt, resentment, and sorrow. Their tears and laughter were as clean and transparent as a stream. I cried a lot. I

couldn't cry out loud because I was serving guests, so I shed tears without a sound and blew my nose. When I got a headache and felt faint from crying so much, I went out to the entrance to the funeral home and looked dumbly at the noticeboard, getting some fresh air. There was "Na Yu-ja" shining blue, the name of my grandmother, that I had almost never thought of when she was alive. I continued to repeat, Na Yu-ja, Na Yu-ja, Na Yu-ja. I had also prepared myself, I had even made her a coffin to do it properly. I had imagined and practiced a lot, but I couldn't accept the reality. I had watched her die, had cried when everyone cried, and even bowed down in front of the portrait in the funeral parlor during the wake, but it didn't seem real. It seemed that real practice would begin now.

On the evening of the first day of the funeral wake, the girl I had broken up with two years before came to pay her condolences. She bowed quietly, took my hand and looked into my eyes. Her eyes and nose were red as if she had been crying. For nearly seven years, we had gone through all the crises of our twenties together. I had even introduced her to my grandmother. My grandmother liked her because her eyes were pretty and her voice was clear. We had dated for a long time and thought we would go on seeing each other for longer, but we broke up without a word. She said she wasn't sure of my feelings and said we needed some time, and that was it. Like the lyrics of a song, no one had expected that we would break up so easily, but there were days when all sorts of foolish questions, like whether the adjective "easy" could be followed by the noun "breakup," whether such a usage was even possible, gathered inside me and quietly rotted away.

I asked her how she knew.

It's just... I heard.

I urged her to eat something, but she declined and said she would go.

And she said as she left the funeral parlor.

I thought you'd be terrified.

Because I know what your grandma meant to you, honey.

She called me "honey." When we were together, and even after we broke up, it was the same. I didn't realize it when we were dating, but it was a warm word. I said Thank you very much for coming."

This seems to be your truest self I've ever seen.

That was her reply to my thanks. Even today, I sometimes think about the meaning of those words. I think of truth and true feelings. I think of the time we spent together and the loneliness that each of us must have felt. When the blade of parting was lingering over us, there were words she uttered as if she'd made up her mind. You haven't made any effort to improve our relationship. You just let go of everything. At the time, I took this as a complaint. The realization that they might have been an appeal came later. Wasn't it the last sign she was sending me that she wanted to find a way other than breaking up? Had I known it then, we wouldn't have parted tepidly like that. I would have done my best even in parting. I've always been afraid of the obvious fact that I can't do anything about the people who come to me and people who leave me. Whenever I had to reveal my sincerity, I took out my shield first. I didn't even try to say I love you or I don't love you. I didn't know at the time that sincerity requires effort, sometimes the greatest effort. That's the kind of person I was.

A few days after the funeral, the weather suddenly changed. It felt as if winter had fallen from the sky. It was the day I took out the winter jacket and woolen hat that I had left in one corner of the closet without washing them. After finishing work, I rode my bike past the station plaza, grunted once, rode on a bit further, then gently applied the brake. I stood with one foot

on the ground and looked back. So-jin was smoking in the smoking area at one corner of the plaza.

Fifteen years before, we had drunk milk coffee at dawn and then met at school the next day. I couldn't openly say hello as if we were friends, but greeted her with a cautious look. So-jin accepted my glance naturally and that was it. I couldn't get any closer. So I deliberately avoided her. If I saw So-jin in the distance, I would turn back. Then one day I realized that I was no longer peering into the living room through the crack in the door. Another day, I realized that my father and mother locked the bedroom door and were sleeping together. From a certain day on, I also slept with my door locked, and from a certain day on, I locked my door and went outside, riding my bicycle round the old town until dawn shone over the road.

I couldn't go to So-jin's house, so I wandered around nearby searching for the smell of cigarettes. The feeling that I wanted to meet her battled fiercely with the feeling that I didn't want to meet her. Sitting side by side on a deserted street in the dark of night, drinking milk coffee, then seeing each other the next day at school, I was afraid to go back to normal and confirm that there was no more. Those nights continued until I graduated from middle school. After changing into high-school uniform, I gradually forgot. But the memory was not fully erased, so that I thought of So-jin whenever I rode my bike in the middle of the night.

So-jin put out her cigarette and walked slowly across the station plaza. I kept looking at her. I wanted her to recognize me first, but she didn't. I called to her. I wasn't the kind of person who calls to someone first like that. If the other person greets me, I respond and say hello, and if the other person passes by, I just pass by too. Whether I was fifteen or thirty, I had to stop being myself for a while to be able to stand alongside So-jin.

You are very....

So-jin looked into my eyes and muttered.

Very... changed.

I took off my woolen hat.

What shall I... you've grown. As a person.

You've grown too.

So-jin's words sounded special, but when I said the same thing, it sounded quite matter-of-course.

Of course I've grown too. I must be over ten centimeters taller.

So-jin laughed and accepted my words. Come to think of it, I had grown that much too.

Not in body, not in size, but this feeling....

She took a step back and looked at me. I put my hands in my pockets and touched a coin. I took out the coin and showed it to her. I suggested we go inside the station and drink a cup of milk coffee. She laughed.

So-jin said that she worked at a hotel in a big city. I said I made furniture. Even though a lot had happened in the meantime, all I could say to her was, "I'm making furniture." I couldn't say things like, "Because of you, I have a favorite season." So-jin said she came down to her hometown once every couple of months. After hearing that, I thought that I would no longer be able to pass the train station casually. She took a business card from her purse and gave it to me. Then I glimpsed her ID card. The front digits of her social security number were the same as mine. I said that we had the same birthday, took out my ID and showed it to her. So-jin said that like me, she was born before sunrise. In the same hospital as I was born.

Do we meet again after completing one full cycle?

So-jin said. I thought about what she meant.

It's just... that we were born on the same day, at about the same time, in the same place, we met by chance at dawn when we were fifteen, and now that we are thirty, we've met by chance again... I want to keep folding it up like this. Every fifteen years.

So-jin said, pretending to fold a piece of paper. I wondered whether it was a coincidence. Then, like now, I had recognized her first and stopped and stayed put, so could I call it a coincidence? So-jin reeled off the names of the kids she used to hang out with and asked if I knew how they were doing. I didn't know the kids who were close to So-jin, and she probably didn't know either. The kids I was close with, or myself from those times... The only link between So-jin and myself was a dawn at fifteen and a night at thirty. She asked me for my business card. I replied that I didn't have one. She told me to contact her if I ever needed to stay at a hotel. I didn't tell her to contact me if she needed furniture. She said that she was planning to travel back up by night train three days later, and suggested that we meet before that for a meal or a drink. She said she had lost contact with almost all her friends, it was nice to meet like this, we should be in touch often. None of those words felt sincere. They were like mere formalities.

The amount of coffee in the paper cup was too small and I had nothing I could say to So-jin. My mind grew increasingly empty. As I was putting So-jin's business card in my pocket, I remembered the cigarette she had given me and how careful I had been not to break it. I had hidden it deep in a drawer and kept it for a very long time, and couldn't remember when and how it had disappeared.

So-jin didn't know my contact information, so I had to contact her first if we were going to meet. I took out her business card several times and quickly memorized her number.

I counted the days left until our birthday.

After work, I stayed in the workshop and drew a design. I wanted to make a chair with a soft back and armrest that enveloped the body properly. I wanted to make a chair suitable for sitting and resting until coffee cools, not a chair to sit on for a long time, a chair for one suitable for dawn rather than afternoon or sunset. I didn't think about what I would do with the chair after finishing it.

The night I finished the design, I got a text message from my former girlfriend. She texted me, asking if everything was going well and if I was feeling okay. Then I remembered Grandmother. I had thought of my grandmother every day before and after the funeral, but after seeing So-jin in the station plaza, I realized that I had not thought of her for over a day. I was so surprised that I laughed out loud. I felt as if I had turned a switch on after turning it off. I was filled with shame and guilt, but... Now I had no maternal grandmother and I could do nothing but remember her, and even though we cared for and comforted each other, we were parted. It couldn't last forever. So the grieving would never end. Sometimes I might forget it, but I couldn't completely erase it. I sent a short reply saying that everything was going well, thank you. Past the time of our breakup, when even words of comfort and worry were suppressed, I wondered if now we were comfortable enough to share such things.

A reply came: I'm sorry I misunderstood you, I hope you're doing well.

I looked at the message for a good while.

I had the impression that until now, it had just been practice, and that the real breakup had finally arrived.

I replied, I also wish you well, honey.

For the first and last time, I called her "honey," hoping that the warmth would reach her, and I thought of the chair again.

Before the ceremony for washing and shrouding the body, my eldest aunt pulled me aside and spoke to me. When Grandma was in the nursing home, didn't you stop by every day, didn't you visit every day and hold her hand and talk to her, didn't you do things that even her children couldn't do? When we shroud her, you too should come in and hold her hand one last time, Grandma would want that too....

I hesitated. I didn't want to see Grandmother's... corpse. I didn't want to feel cold, pale death. But I couldn't say no so I went in and held her hand. At that moment, I lost it completely. I thought I knew then why the grown-ups had brought me in. It was for me to check. To make sure that Grandmother was definitely dead, that she was a corpse, that she wasn't just practicing. I sprawled on the floor and wailed. I screamed until everyone held their hands over their ears. I may even have cursed. I grabbed someone's leg and crawled. I hit the floor, ripped out my hair, and tore at my clothes. I wanted to die.

When the time came for the funeral procession to set out, everyone wept bitterly. As if sadder than when she had just died, they cried until they were exhausted. I tried to keep my eyes open as much as I could, stay alert and watch everything, even as I wiped away my tears. It bothered me that I had acted like a crazy person at the shrouding ceremony. She was inside the coffin I had made, that she had said was good, that she wouldn't be afraid, so I thought Grandma wouldn't feel good that I had cried and made a scene like that. For the last day at least, I wanted to show her I was reliable. I wanted to convince her that what I had said about death was not wrong. I didn't want to wake Grandmother from her good dreams by crying.

On the morning of the third day after I met So-jin at the station plaza, I received a birch log. When I made Grandmother's coffin, I'd had no choice but to let the carpenter help me from design to finish. Now, even if it took a long time, I intended to make the chair by myself. After I finished my regular work in the workshop, the sun was setting while I cut the wood and sanded it according to the design.

So-jin had said she would leave that night.

When I called So-jin's name at the station plaza, when So-jin recognized me, was she happy at that time? I couldn't remember properly. What did I look like? What was my expression then? For the past three days, had she been waiting for my call?

I roughly cleaned up the workshop, put on a coat and a scarf. I wanted to take the design for the chair, but I resisted.

So-jin had said it was a coincidence. I didn't think it was a coincidence.

I got on my bike and sped to the station.

Nothing really happened between us because I had recognized So-jin first. But at least I had a favorite season, the milk coffee from the vending machine had become special, and soon there would be a chair, things that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't called to So-jin first. From that early morning when I was fifteen, So-jin had changed my direction in life just by being there. I had stopped her in her tracks, made her turn around, and made her walk in a certain direction, even though I knew it was a dead end. It was uncommon for me. When I was dating, too many words of love made me weary. Love is what it is, but sometimes I was obliged to prove it. But how? I still don't know how. Those who believe in God do not need to prove the existence of God.

I sat on a chair in the waiting room and waited for So-jin.

Time passed, announcements were made, trains arrived, lingered, and left.

Two hours later, So-jin pushed open the glass door and came in. I got up. This time, we recognized each other at the same moment. Have you been waiting for me? So-jin spoke first. I'm here to see you off. I answered. You should have contacted me. So-jin said. Do you want to drink some coffee? I asked. So-jin laughed. I stood in front of the vending machine and waited for the coffee to come out. I think you've been handling wood? So-jin said as she dusted my hair with her fingers. What were you making? So-jin asked. I replied that I was making a chair. It wouldn't be very comfortable, but it would be a good chair to sit on and rest for a while.

There were about ten minutes left before the train So-jin would take entered the station. In the meantime, the coffee would have cooled enough to drink. I knew very well that I couldn't wish for anything more.

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