

Reminiscing

by Melissa Olavius Dehn

They had been close, when they were younger. Their dad had been the captain of a ship, so he'd been away most of the year, and their mom had been busy working in her small restaurant, so most of the time it had just been the two of them. Before they became teenagers, they had played together every day; they had built cities out of their mom's plants, they had sat outside playing Gonggi on the concrete. But then Hyunjin, being a few years older than Bohyun, had become a teenager. After that all she wanted to do was read, immerse herself in imaginary worlds, and all Bohyun got was a door in the face. And now, 13 years later, here Bohyun was, in Hyunjin's favorite bookstore. It was still here, after all those years. Bohyun hadn't been here since she was a kid, but she knew Hyunjin had. As she walked in, the bell above the door rang, signaling her arrival. She was welcomed by the familiar smell of books, old as new; Hyunjin had loved that smell, but Bohyun loathed it. It reminded her of a door in the face, and now it also reminded her of her sister.

The bookstore was exactly how she remembered it, tall bookcases filled to the brim with books, a little black sign above letting you know the genre. She appreciated how this was the one store in Seoul where you weren't immediately greeted by the storeowner; in here the staff just let you walk around by yourself, unless you asked for help. Bohyun took a deep breath and slowly approached Hyunjin's favorite section: English Literature. Hyunjin had always wanted to learn English; it had been her dream to publish her own fantasy novel in English. Now she would never see that dream become reality. Bohyun held in a sob as she let her fingers ghost over the titles. She recognized some words, but as her eyes became blurry, it became harder and harder to read them.

She pressed her forehead against the bookcase, the hard, cold line pressing against her skin. She tried to collect herself by taking long, deep breaths. Slowly the tears subsided. She cracked open her eyes, and looked at the bookcase right in front of her face. It was made of a light wood, cheap but strong enough to carry thousands of words. She could still see the lines that ran along the side of the tree, each line accounting for a year the tree had lived. But it was cut down, dead, way too soon. Just like her sister.

While she was looking at the bookcase, she spotted a book. It was right in front of her face, eyes drawn to the recognizable green cover. It had been Hyunjin's favorite book ever since she read it for the first time when she was 14. Bohyun, being 12 and immature at the time, had hated it based solely on the fact that Hyunjin loved it. She had scorned it, had sworn to never read it because of how terrible it was sure to be, but when she was forced to read it for school a few years later, she had realized how brilliant it truly was. She'd never told her sister.

She took out the book from the shelf, tentatively. It was brand new, the green cover shining in the sunlight. The cover was slightly different from how she remembered it; it was probably a

newer edition. And yet, when she saw the title written in those bold, silver letters, it felt familiar in her hands.

She took the book with her to one of the comfy-looking chairs next to the windows and opened it. But she couldn't focus on the words glaring up at her face. All she could see was her sister, sitting in the very same bookstore, enjoying the very same book.

Oh how Bohyun missed her. Why had she never told Hyunjin, how much she loved the book? Why hadn't she gone to see her more often when she was alive? If only Bohyun had been there for her...