

The Tunnel on Main Street



Ichan Jung

직장인들에게
To the Workers

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My Place

My apartment was in the middle of the neon city, Seoul. Play ground, convenient store and theater. Everything was there. My siblings and I were happy but my parents weren't. They have wanted to live in peace. My family finally moved from Seoul to Uncheon when I was 9 years old. Seoul is a big city in Korea whereas Uncheon is a very small and quiet place in the countryside. The place where I moved to was like Black and White.

Most of the people living in Uncheon were old and even the buildings there were old. It was hard to find a friend...

Our house is on the main street. Tunnel. We fondly nicknamed our house as a tunnel because the front building is a pharmacy where my daddy works and the back side is our house. The pharmacy and our house are connected with a door in between. My parents were happy with the smaller house and liked the neighbors. My mom wakes up early in the morning and has tea time with a lady from next door. My dad goes fishing every Saturday morning with the village head. Unlike my parents, I could not stand the place. I miss my friends and my go-to spots in Seoul. Everyday, every night, I asked myself when I could go back to the true place in my heart. The only place where I felt I belonged.

My Name

Ichon Jung, a beautiful Korean name, means full of affection. Not everyone can get a beautiful name in Hangul, the traditional Korean language, and I'm a lucky boy who has it. My parents loved our own language, independent of Chinese influence, so my siblings and I were named in Hangul unlike others. I like my name, but I wondered what would it be like if my name was in Chinese character like others. In middle school, I had to write my name in

Chinese characters for my Chinese class, but I couldn't. All my classmates laughed at me because not like me, they were named in Chinese. I was different from them. I was embarrassed, but as I grew older, I came to see how fortunate I am to have a name in pure Korean, for I'm Korean.

A Rabbit in the Small Cage

There was a rabbit in the small cage that wanted freedom. Only one I could understand. I have lived in the city since 9. However, my parents decided to move to the countryside. There is nothing. No apartments, no many people, and even my friends. There was only one rabbit in the cage at my elementary school. The rabbit gets around in the small cage. He tried to escape from the cage through a small hole. He never succeeded, but he tries with

eyes that want to find freedom. Everyday he tries, tries, tries again. Whenever I get tired and depressed, I see the rabbit. Rabbit who keeps holding onto the hope of finding his life.

Mom Who Cries in the Dark

Everything was perfect, the weather was warm, and even the air was clean. It was the day my grandmother got vaccinated for COVID. She said everything was good, and we didn't have to worry too much. A day after the COVID-19 vaccination, she began to have a high fever and was experiencing paralysis. She could not walk alone anymore. The tragedy came overnight. She lost everything, and we could not do anything to help her. With the tragedy

at hand, I saw my mother crying quietly in her room alone. I did not know what I should do for her. I had never seen my mother cry. Seeing her in the dark room, I thought about what I would do if my mom got very sick. I can't imagine my life without my mother. All I could do was to quietly close the door for her that night.

My Own Quiet War

A skinny and small boy. That was me. I'm the youngest in my family. My parents urged me on. "Be a Man! A Man should be strong and smart." So I was told. Everyday, I had to eat more than I could and had to study harder than I could bear because I was a little man. It seemed like they wanted me to be Superman. A Superman.

I was a shy boy. "Hey, why don't you play

outside with your friends?" the Parrot said. Parrot is my teacher who always asks the same thing when he sees me. He repeated the same thing to me over and over again. He was smart and his body was as hard as a huge rock just how my parents would have liked to have me.

Every night I prayed that I would grow up quickly. I didn't want to hear *it* anymore. But soon I realized. Even if I become a man, they would not stop demanding me to be a man. I just read a book in my class. I am who I am.

Good day

Our school was like a jungle, and Hosung was an explorer and also a great leader. He seemed like he already knew where to go. No one taught him the way, but he knew somehow and even he couldn't stand it when he saw someone alone. Everyone liked him except me because he and I had different personalities. I didn't like him until I came to know about his background...

He tried to take me out into the *world*, the world of activities. "Ichan, let's play soccer," says Hosung. And I didn't answer. He never gave up on me and urged me again, again, and again...

One day when the weather was neither good nor bad, he walked toward me holding a lollipop. "No, I don't want to play," I stood my ground. He handed over the lollipop to me without a word. When our shadows grew darker, he broke the silence. "I'm not from here either," he says. I was surprised and became instantly curious about him. We shared our stories until the street lights came on. So, I stepped into the *world* with him.

