

Super Genius DNA #Chapter 11: Treating the Flu (3) - Read Super Genius DNA Chapter 11: Treating the Flu (3)

Chapter 11: Treating the Flu (3)

Bleep!

With a ring, Rosaline sent a message to Young-Joon.

[Rosaline searched for current methods you can use.]

[Recommends eradicating Influenza A by using the new flu virus.]

“What...”

Getting rid of the flu with the new influenza virus? The word “flu” literally meant “influenza”, meaning that the new flu virus was the same thing as the new influenza virus.

‘Eradicating the flu with the flu? What kind of pseudoscience is this? It’s like fighting fire with fire.’

Young-Joon was bewildered.

[There is a tendency for the seasonal flu virus strain to become wiped out when a new flu virus begins to circulate.]

An explanation popped up on the window.

[The new flu virus is highly contagious and can quickly infect the world’s population. And the new flu virus contains the gene of the existing flu virus.]

[The people infected with the new flu virus will also gain resistance to the existing flu virus. It will have the same effect as vaccinating the entire world at once.]

[If the entire world is infected with the new flu virus, the seasonal flu virus will not have a host to infect, therefore going extinct.]

“Holy crap...”

Well, Rosaline wasn't wrong. In fact, there was some research that stated the past seasonal flu virus went extinct after something like the Spanish Flu went around and killed a million people.

Rosaline's messages kept popping up.

[Rosaline recommends synthesizing a new flu virus based on a rhinovirus.]

'Rhinovirus.'

They were just pathogens that caused the common cold. It was much less virulent compared to the flu virus.

[With this, you can create a pathogen that has the virulence of the common cold and the contagiousness of a new flu virus.]

Bleep!

[Make this into an aerosol and spray it in many populated areas around the world. All of humanity will gain resistance to the flu virus in six months, and the virus will die.]

Bleep!

With an alert, a window of options came up.

[Select to see how to create a new rhinovirus-based flu.]

[Select to see how to create it into aerosol form.]

[Select to see target locations to spread the virus.]

"This is completely insane!" Young-Joon screamed. "This isn't spreading a cure, it's spreading a disease! Are you crazy?!"

[The rhinovirus is just a normal cold virus. The new flu virus suggested above is not dangerous.]

A message popped up as if it had heard Young-Joon talking to himself.

"What? It can also answer me?"

[Rosaline is currently at Level 2. She is capable of simple conversations for options that consume more than 1 point of Fitness.]

“Uh...”

Young-Joon gulped.

“Whatever. I can’t do this. Even if it is a rhinovirus that has low virulence, people who are immunocompromised could die.”

[However, it is below the number of deaths caused by the flu in three years. It is past the breakeven point.]

“ ... ”

‘Breaking even with human lives? What kind of thinking system does this lunatic have?’

[And since seasonal flus will disappear forever, it is the most useful and effective method considering the risk and cost. It is also the only method you can choose, Ryu Young-Joon.]

“Ah, enough! I can’t do that. That’s something a mad scientist would do.”

[Ryu Young-Joon. I have watched you create embryonic stem cells. It was unexpected that you would use Rosaline’s power on something so trivial.]

“What?”

[You are not a scientist of a pharmaceutical company, but a Player of Life. If you have a target you want to catch and you have a gun in your hand, I don’t understand why you are trying to catch it by hitting it with the buttstock when it’s much easier to aim and pull the trigger.]

“Then are you saying that there’s an easier way to make stem cells?”

[No. I am saying that there is no need.]

“Explain.”

[You do not have enough fitness. To analyze complicated life processes, Rosaline’s level...]

“Ugh, are you kidding me right now?”

[Rosaline can only provide data within the fitness level. Increase your level.]

[Ryu Young-Joon. The creation of life is a one-time event. Even if another scientist does what you did in the A-Gen Life Creation lab, Rosaline will not be created.]

“I know that.”

[You are the first Player of Life in humanity, but also the only one. I hope you take responsibility for your luck and use your powers wisely.]

“Even if you say that, I’m not doing something as crazy as spreading a cold. That’s a bioterror, not vaccination.”

[Shutdown.]

The messages about the synthesis of the new flu virus were minimized.

“Shutdown? Hey?” magic

[...]

No answer.

“Damn it.”

Young-Joon sat on his bed and quietly stared at Rosaline’s status window.

[Rosaline Lv.2]

—Metastatic Status: Heart (2%), Liver (46%), Brain (7%), Kidney (13%), Spinal Cord (4%)

Synchronization: 4%

—Cell Fitness: 0.3

—Gene Expression Control: None

The gene expression control category had changed without Young-Joon noticing. Rosaline had said that the expression of CYP2E1 would continue for three days.

Young-Joon searched the internet for flu treatments while recovering Rosaline's fitness. Other than Tamiflu, there were other new drugs like Janamivir and Flu-Free. It took Young-Joon about three hours for Young-Joon to investigate their properties, chemical structures, and usage.

[Cell Fitness: 0.9]

Rosaline's fitness had reasonably recovered. Young-Joon opened the information about the flu from Rosaline's status window.

1. Biological mechanism of flu infection. (Fitness consumption rate: 0.05/second)
2. Cure for Influenza A. (Fitness consumption: 0.9)
3. Strategy for eradicating Influenza A. (Complete)

Young-Joon was now able to open option three without any requirements. He pressed the second one this time.

A single cell in the human body had twenty thousand kinds of genes. Then how many kinds of genes would a flu virus have? Barely ten. Right now, the products of the ten genes from the virus were interacting in front of Young-Joon's eyes, like a car. Young-Joon had to find the weakness in the huge, complicated machinery. A car could be stopped from accelerating by putting a small, heavy piece of metal on its brakes, and this was how new drugs were developed. He had to find a chemical substance that capitalized on a biological substance required for the flu virus.

Blink!

The molecular structure floated in front of Young-Joon's eyes like a haze.

"Found it."

Young-Joon quickly copied the shape onto his notebook.

It was similar to Tamiflu, but it had a benzene ring attached to it on the right side with a distinct motif. It was a drug that blocked the activation of a certain protein of the flu virus.

In a way, the flu virus market could be as large as the stem cell treatment market. Like Rosaline said, the flu was so contagious that the new flu could infect the entire world. And considering that the Spanish Flu killed over a million people, the fatality rate wasn't low in patients with poor immunity.

Whether it was a new flu or a seasonal flu, it would be used widely in the medical field if it was a drug that could prevent the multiplication of a virus by administering it right after the infection.

Tamiflu was also very famous when it first came out, but Young-Joon had developed a drug similar to it with a few minutes of meditation.

'The problem is that I have to test this drug.'

Rosaline's status window gave him the right answer, but it was up to Young-Joon to prove to others that it was the right answer. He had decided to use A-Gen with the stem cells because he couldn't do it alone.

But for this one, he was thinking of proving it through another company. He would monopolize the patent and then quickly sell it without going to clinical trials.

Young-Joon opened a new tab on his computer and searched for a company that would do his experiments for him.

—Reaction Chemistry

—Cell Bio

Reaction Chemistry was a company Young-Joon used often when he was in the Anticancer Drug Research Department. They manufactured chemicals through organic synthesis reactions. They were quite good; they had also succeeded in creating a substance that A-Gen's Organic Synthesis Department had failed to make.

Cell Bio was a company that specialized in biological experiments. If a customer sent over a few potential drug candidates, they did cell and animal testing for them.

The problem was the money. He would need a lot of money to commission these kinds of experiments, and applying for a patent would also cost quite a bit of money. He thought that he would need at least ten million won to do it. But where would he get that kind of money?

'Should I call the loan company for more money?'

Young-Joon already had some debt. He thought that he could take on some more debt since this was an investment that would have a high return.

He was lost in thought, then felt his stomach grumble.

"Let's get some food first."

It was already one o'clock in the afternoon, but he still hadn't eaten lunch. He decided to go grab some food.

Click.

Just when he opened the door and was about to leave, Young-Joon saw a familiar face standing in front of the door.

"Huh?"

"Woah."

It was a nice-looking man who was wearing a suit. He was Young-Joon's friend whom he had known for twenty years.

"Park Joo-Hyuk?"

"I was just about to ring the doorbell."

Park Joo-Hyuk pulled Young-Joon by the shoulder and hugged him tightly.

"What? Why did you come here without telling me?"

"It was a surprise visit that you're supposed to be moved by."

"Why are you here?"

"I was worried if my little Young-Joon was doing well, if you were eating well, and if your ugly face got better."

“It’s been a while since we met, and you’re already spewing nonsense. Did your probation period at the Lawyer Association or something end well?”

“Of course. I am a real lawyer that can be appointed.”

“Lucky. If I punch Kim Hyun-Taek by accident at work or something, please defend me.”

“Is Kim Hyun-Taek your lab director?”

“Not anymore. I got punished and got transferred. I’m at another lab.”

“Because of you cursing at him?”

“Yeah.”

“Is it something that this righteous lawyer should step up for?”

“No. You don’t have to do anything. I’m going to crush him with my scientific career. But Joo-Hyuk... Do you have some cash?”

“Why? I don’t have any since I’m not working yet.”

“I need about ten million won.”

Park Joo-Hyuk’s jaw fell to the floor.

“Did... Did you get into some trouble after juggling your credit cards?”

Young-Joon’s family had been poor ever since he was young. His parents had retired, and they had two hundred million won in credit card debt. They did not have a car or a house.

Young-Joon also had school loans, credit card loans, and other debts. And Park Joo-Hyuk knew this because he was an old friend of his. However, Young-Joon never asked Park Joo-Hyuk for money once, even if he had to starve, so Park Joo-Hyuk was surprised when he asked for ten million won.

“No, it’s nothing like that,” Young-Joon said.

“If it’s not anything like that, why do you need that much money? You didn’t get a loan from loan sharks or anything while I was busy during my probation period, right?”

“No.”

“Phew.”

“I went to the loan sharks before you went into your probation period.”

“Holy shit... How much?”

“Thirty million won.”

“Thirty million!” Park Joo-Hyuk said in shock. “You have debt other than your student loans? Debt? And you’re seriously talking about loan sharks? What did you use it for?”

“I had my mother’s debt as well as my father’s. I juggled around loans to pay those off, and that’s how I ended up like this. It is from loan sharks, but the interest rate isn’t that bad. Although my credit score is pretty low.”

“Shit...”

“But that’s not the reason why I’m asking you to lend me money. There’s somewhere else I want to use it.”

“You have somewhere else to use ten million won when you’re in debt for thirty million, idiot? You should pay off some of the principal if you have that kind of money!”

“I’m doing it to pay it off.”

“Are you going to go to a casino or something? Or pouring it all into stocks...”

“No.”

“No? I don’t think so. *Sigh*. Remember when you were playing Lineage in middle school, and you dropped a super expensive item or something? You bought twenty random boxes with your allowance to get it again, and what did you get?”[1]

“Hey, that was a long time ago!”

“You don’t think I know you? I’ll help you pay off your loan when I get paid after I get into a law firm, so don’t think about doing anything stupid and just save so we can pay it off.”

“Stop it. You gave some of the money you earned from working part-time and gave it to my father, right?”

“Hup...” Park Joo-Hyuk was flustered.

“You didn’t think I would know? My father told me a long time ago.”

“I kept telling him to not tell you... Well, even if it was *your* father, I’ve known him since I was a kid...”

“It’s enough that you used the little money you earned while scraping grills and studying for the bar to pay off your friend’s father’s debt. You don’t have to take on my debt, too... You’re not a charity worker. It’s fine.”

“Then, what are you going to do with thirty million won of debt?”

“I’m going to make a drug.”

“A drug?”

“Just watch. I’m going to be able to buy a building if this works out.”

Park Joo-Hyuk squinted and stared at him in doubt.

“One of the legal cases I read had a graduate student who was caught for producing and selling addictive drugs...”

“Seriously, it’s nothing like that! It’s a new and legal drug.”

“Are you serious?” Park Joon-Hyuk asked.

“Yeah,” Young-Joon replied.

“Making a new drug... At A-Gen? Are you leading it?”

“No, I’m not getting any help from A-Gen. I’m doing it on my own. I’m going to patent the drug and sell it.”

“Nope, not going to happen. Your company is going to take it because it’s an employee invention. You’ll get some compensation, though.”

“It doesn’t involve A-Gen.”

“Even if you don’t use their facilities, you can’t do it because it incorporates the knowledge and ideas you gained from A-Gen, dummy. If you do experiments about anticancer drugs at work, the drug you make outside of work is the company’s.”

“It’s not an anticancer drug. It’s for the flu.”

“The flu?”

Park Joo-Hyuk stared at him with squinted eyes.

Young-Joon explained, “Yeah. It doesn’t fit the conditions of employee inventions because it’s out of the scope of my work, right? Just because a microbial researcher improves a microscope, doesn’t mean it’s the company’s, right?”

“Ah, this damn scientist is giving me a headache. It’s not outside your scope of work, but your job. In this case, it falls under inventions anyways...”

“So is it mine or not?”

“I don’t know, man. It depends on your contract. But there is a case where the Supreme Court acknowledged an employee’s invention as their own when the company supported them and funded their patent. The law protects the individual’s right for inventions a lot, so I guess it can be defended.”

“Right? And I’m part of Lab One. They don’t even work with the flu there. I don’t know how it looks to an arts person like you, but a drug for the flu and cancer are very different.”

“Really? Then you’ll probably be fine. Just in case, did you go to any seminars about the flu or see any data on developing a drug for the flu at A-Gen?”

“Never.”

“Okay, then. But personally, I want to stop you. If A-Gen sues you, and even if you can win, an individual going up against a company like that...”

“Park Joo-Hyuk will defend me for free, right?”

“How did someone like you become my friend? Oh, but you have to do experiments and stuff like that, right? Can you do that yourself?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

“That’s why I need ten million won. To request for experiments to be done on my behalf.”

“I don’t know, man. You’re not doing weed or anything, right?”

“Stop talking nonsense. Let’s stop talking about this if you’re not going to lend me the money. Since you came all the way here, buy me something good before you go.”

“How did you manage to put a plot twist on a sentence so short? I thought you would tell me that you were going to treat me.”

“I have no money.”

Park Joo-Hyuk ruffled his hair, then nodded.

“Let’s go. Meals always come first. Let’s talk about it over lunch.”

1. Lineage was a popular MMORPG game in Korea that a lot of people played in the past. ?

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Young-Joon and Park Joo-Hyuk ordered a rice set meal from a restaurant nearby. Even as they were eating, Young-Joon was looking through his contacts to see if there were people whom he could borrow money from.

Watching him, Park Joo-Hyuk asked, “Can you really buy a building if you have ten million won?”

“Yep.”

“What’s the drug you’re making?”

“It’s a new medicine for the flu. It’s like Tamiflu, but more effective. Plus, storage and production will be much easier, too.”

“And you’re going to develop it on your own by commissioning the experiments to another company to make it unrelated to A-Gen? Then, you’re going to patent it?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, it makes legal sense, but can you make that much money if you develop and patent it yourself?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

“Do you know how much Tamiflu makes in a year?”

“How much?”

“Three trillion won.”

Park Joo-Hyuk squinted his eyes in disbelief.

“Three... Trillion?”

“A pharmaceutical company called Roche is selling that right now, and their annual international sales is three trillion won. And about five percent goes to the patentee in royalties according to the contract.”

“...”

Park Joo-Hyuk was lost in thought. Looking at him, Young-Joon said, “Hey. If you can lend me the money, just trust me and invest. I’ll give you five times what you lent me.”

“If you develop a drug, you’re going to have to do years of clinical trials before commercializing it. How are you going to earn anything in a year?”

“I’m going to show its effectiveness with animal testing, then sell it to a pharmaceutical company as a prototype. I don’t want to live poor for a few years while developing it, no matter how successful it might be. I’m thinking I’ll get about ten billion won if I sell it as a prototype.”

Park Joo-Hyuk had some seaweed soup, then sighed.

“Man~ I still think this guy is shitting me right now.”

“Joo-Hyuk, I told you everything because it’s you. I already know the structure of the new drug, and I have a sense of its effectiveness. I just need to experiment with it and prove it.”

“Hm... Alright. I’ll lend it to you,” Park Joo-Hyuk replied.

“I thought you had no money?”

“I only have five million won. I’ll borrow the other five million and lend it to you.”

“Are you crazy? That’s not what I meant. Let it go if you don’t have the money to. I’m not going to pretend I don’t know you after I succeed just because you don’t lend me it. You don’t have to get a loan.”

“What are you going to do if I don’t give it to you? You have a terrible personality and anger issues, so you don’t have many friends other than me. Where are you going to borrow it from? Loan sharks? Again?”

Young-Joon flinched. Park Joo-Hyuk scoffed as Young-Joon lowered his head.

“This bastard was really going to go to loan sharks again. It’s fine. I’ll get it for you.”

Park Joo-Hyuk grabbed his phone and called someone right away.

“Hello? Yes, Big Bro! It’s me, Joo-Hyuk. Yes.”

Park Joo-Hyuk then made some small talk, explained that he needed five million won urgently, read him his bank account number and hung up.

“Who was that?” Young-Joon asked.

“A colleague from law school. He’s rich.”

“How rich is he that he can just lend you five million won on the spot?”

“He’s a third generation chaebol.”[1]

“Wow...”

“But just because they are a chaebol doesn’t mean that they spend and lend money thoughtlessly. Rich people are actually more picky when it comes to spending. But I’m a lawyer now, and unlike Ryu Young-Joon, the loner from Jungyoon University, I have a huge network of people and great credit because I was always popular. I can get five million won.”

Ring!

There was a message on Park Joo-Hyuk’s phone.

“The money came in. I’ll send it to you.”

“Thanks.”

“I added one hundred thousand won. Don’t starve to death.”

“Are you done? Let’s go, I’ll buy you coffee with the hundred thousand won you just sent me.”

Young-Joon and Park Joo-Hyuk left the restaurant together and ordered some coffee from a nearby coffee shop.

“For here or to go?” The worker asked.

“To go, please.”

Hearing Young-Joon's words, Park Joo-Hyuk tilted his head in puzzlement.

“Are you going somewhere?”

“The pharmacy. Sorry, I need to call someone.”

Young-Joon called Manager Kim Ji-Chul of Reaction Chemistry.

“Hello, sir.”

—Hello! It’s been a while, Doctor!

Kim Ji-Chul greeted him with a cheery voice.

—Have you been well? Is there something you need to synthesize?”

“Yes, I’ll send over an email with the structural formula of the chemical to be synthesized right now.”

Young-Joon sent an email with the structural formula of the flu cure that was saved in his cloud.

—Yes, I got it. Hm... I’m going to have to think about how to synthesize this.

“The synthesis mechanism is there, too. I attached a PDF file as well, right? That’s the synthesis mechanism.”

—The synthesis mechanism?

“Yes.”

There was no way a biologist like Young-Joon knew the synthesis mechanism of organic molecules; the two were as different as painting and music.

Young-Joon had requested for synthesis a few times at A-Gen, but he had never commissioned it like this.

But he was confident as it was the synthesis mechanism that Rosaline gave him.

‘This is what I should get for spending 0.9 fitness.’

* * *

Organic synthesis was kind of like a game of Go; just like how the flow of the game changed depending on where the next stone was placed, the chemical structure changed as well.

Like herding sheep, they had to protect against the undesirable mechanisms using defense mechanisms and induce the reactions wanted. Of course, it wasn't simple, and even experienced chemists had to carefully design the synthesis with the final structure in mind.

It cost quite a lot of time and money. However, it was much easier if they had the synthesis mechanism. It was easier than that if they had the starting materials.

“I also have the starting materials for the synthesis mechanism I sent you. I'll ship it to you,” Young-Joon said.

—You have the starting materials?

Kim Ji-Chul asked like he was excited. magic

Starting materials referred to the chemical molecules that were present at the beginning of the organic synthesis. In terms of Go, it was like letting a novice place a few stones beforehand; synthesis was generally much easier to do if they started at defined points in the mechanism.

“Yes. I’ll also send over the structure of the starting materials by email right now. Please look over it.”

—Alright.

The starting material Young-Joon was talking about was Cozel, a regular cold medicine that was sold at the pharmacy. He saw that the structure was very similar, so he thought it could be the starting material.

—Oh. If this is the starting material, it should be fairly simple to make.

Kim Ji-Chul spoke in a slightly delighted voice.

“How much of it do you need?”

—About ten grams to be safe?

“Alright. How much would it be?”

—It would have been around three million won if it was just the synthesis, but since you gave us the synthesis mechanism and the starting material, it will probably be around two million won.

One bottle of the cold medicine cost four thousand won. Even if he bought ten grams, it was probably within forty thousand won. Young-Joon had actually profited from this.

“Alright. I will send over the money to the company’s account. I will send the starting material within this week.”

—Okay. I’ll send over the final product to your company after synthesis. Ward B1 of Lab 1...

“No.” Young-Joon stopped him.

“I’ll give you another address.”

—Okay, I’ll write it down.

“Um...”

Young-Joon was about to read him 77-14, Jungyun-ro, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul, but stopped. Maybe his address up to this point was fine, but the other

part was Hyundai One-Room Suite B101. Nothing was wrong with it, but he was worried they would think it was weird. What kind of scientist sent the results of a chemical experiment to his own house?

'Wait. I'm going to send it to Cell Bio anyway for cell experiments.'

"Can you just send it to Cell Bio?"

—Cell Bio?

"Yes. That drug isn't going to be tested at A-Gen. The cell experiments will be commissioned to Cell Bio."

—Alright, I'll send it there. Should I put the package in your name?

"Yes, please do."

It didn't really matter as Young-Joon would just have to tell Cell Bio that a package in his name would be arriving.

"When will the synthesis be done?"

—It will take about a week from the day we receive the starting materials.

"Alright. Thank you."

Young-Joon hung up and turned to look at Park Joo-Hyuk. Their order had come out as he ended the call.

Holding his americano, Young-Joon said, "Well then, let's go and get the starting materials, shall we?"

There were eight tablets in one small paper box. Since one tablet was five hundred milligrams, he would need at least three boxes to get ten grams. He was a little uncomfortable with meeting that woman who worked at Celligener, but there was nothing he could do.

A little while later, Young-Joon and Park Joon-Hyuk arrived at the pharmacy Song Ji-Hyun was running.

Ring.

As they entered with the bell ringing, Song Ji-Hyun greeted them.

“Hello.”

Park Joo-Hyuk suddenly gasped. There were a few customers in the pharmacy, and they were lined up at the back and waiting.

“Hey, did you see?” Park Joon-Hyuk whispered, nudging Young-Joon’s waist. “I went to law school at Jungyoon University, but to be honest, everyone at our school just studied. Everyone was so boring like you that there was an eighty percent chance a pub would shut down within three years of opening. But I didn’t know a fairy like that existed in our town.”

“She’s the niece of the old lady that used to run this pharmacy. She went on vacation and she’s just running it in the meantime.”

“How do you know?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

“Because I asked her before,” Young-Joon replied.

“Do you know her name as well?”

“She has a name tag. Song Ji-Hyun.”

“My god. You already hit on her? Do you have her number?”

“What are you talking about?”

“Have some manners. You already hit on her when I was reading those stupid cases?”

“I think you’re even crazier now that you’ve become a lawyer. You were pretty high before, but do you guys all do drugs at law school?”

“You’re not interested in that pharmacist, right?”

“I can barely take care of myself right now. I don’t have the money or desire to.”

“Okay, then I’m getting her number,” Park Joo-Hyuk declared.

“Woohoo. I’m cheering for you.”

The number of customers in front of them quickly decreased as they were having a meaningless conversation.

“How can I help you?” Song Ji-Hyun asked.

“Could I have three bottles of Cozel?”

Song Ji-Hyun grinned.

“You’re here pretty often. With probiotics and vitamins, now cold medicine?”

She grabbed three bottles of Cozel from under the counter and pushed them toward Young-Joon on the counter.

“It’s twelve thousand won.”

Swipe.

After swiping Young-Joon’s card in the machine, Song Ji-Hyun gave it back to him along with the receipt.

“Are you working on a new drug based on Cozel?” Song Ji-yun asked Young-Joon as he put the Cozel in a bag.

“Ah, well, it’s something like that.”

“Then I can find out where you work when a company releases a new cold medicine for clearing your sinuses, right?”

“Haha, maybe.”

Young-Joon glanced at Park Joo-Hyuk.

‘I thought he was going to get her number. He’s just frozen.’

Since they couldn’t just stand there and block the counter, Young-Joon grabbed Park Joo-Hyuk and left.

“I thought you were going to get her number?”

“I can’t say anything.”

Young-Joon nodded his head. Park Joo-Hyuk had no talent in getting girl’s numbers and things like that.

Young-Joon went to the convenience store with Park Joo-Hyuk. He bought a zipper bag and put all three bottles of Cozel in it. He bought a box and shipped it to Reaction Chemistry right away.

However, he still had things to do.

“Hey, can you also file patents, Joo-Hyuk?” Young-Joon asked.

1. A chaebol refers to a very wealthy family in Korea. ?

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“Well, I can if you want. You want to file a patent?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked Young-Joon.

“Yeah. Right now, if I can. I can’t do this because I need to work my actual job during the weekdays.”

“You want to do it right now?”

“Yeah.”

“Didn’t you just send a package to make a new drug? Am I hallucinating or something? How are you going to file a patent when you don’t even have a drug?”

“I guess this lawyer in front of me doesn’t know the law very well,” Young-Joon said with a chuckle. “You can revise a patent a year after filing it, Joo-Hyuk.”

“I know that, but that’s just a revision, isn’t it?”

“The details aren’t revealed when it’s filed, so you can file it with just the concept and without any data.”

“Shit...”

“So that’s why you file it first, revise it with the experimental data, and then register it after going through an evaluation.”

“Oh my...”

“It looks like something bad like cutting the corners, but it’s not. But there’s fierce competition for a great concept in this field. And you have to declare the concept first so that other researchers don’t bark up the wrong tree with a similar experiment.”

“I guess?”

“And it’s okay since you automatically lose the details in the patent if you don’t get it done in a year. So, I’m going to file it just with the concept and without the data. That way, I can file it quicker.”

“Sure. Lawyers can also file patents, but it will be better for you to talk to a patent attorney.”

“Do you know a patent attorney?”

“Give me a sec.”

Park Joo-Hyuk pulled out his phone and looked through his contacts.

[Lee Hae-Won, Batch of ‘12][1]

* * *

Patent attorney Lee Hae-Won majored in law and minored in biology at Jungyoon University. Young-Joon was completing his master’s degree in graduate school when she entered university, and Park Joo-Hyuk was in law school.

Young-Joon, who was much older than Lee Hae-Won, wouldn’t normally have any reason to meet each other, but Park Joo-Hyuk, the legendary social butterfly of law majors, would sometimes show up at the law majors’ lounge and treat his juniors. Some said that he was being extra, considering how old he was, but Park Joo-Hyuk’s humorous and cool personality made him quite popular amongst his juniors.

One of Park Joo-Hyuk’s juniors during that time was Lee Hae-Won. She was quite close with Park Joo-Hyuk. Some of their fellow students were suspicious of their relationship, but they were really just good friends, although he couldn’t see her for a while because she locked herself up in a goshiwon[2] to study for her patent attorney exam.

She got her license as an attorney, and Park Joo-Hyuk became a lawyer at around the same time. The only way that a novice patent attorney could catch up to her seniors was to bury her face in past cases regarding patents. People who had studied with her called her unbelievably tough, and Lee Hae-Won ended up getting to know everything there was to know about past cases regarding bio-drug patents.

Lee Hae-Won had her own patent-filing business now, but to be honest, she barely got any clients. Why was that?

If someone was the executive manager and had to choose someone to file a patent for a new drug prototype that had an expected value of three trillion won, would they choose a man in his fifties who had lots of life experience or a young lady in her late twenties? Usually, people picked the former. Most of the customers asked if there was anyone more experienced, and when Lee Hae-Won shook her head, they left.

‘Should I go into a patent law firm and gain some experience?’

Lee Hae-Won was thinking the same thing she had been contemplating for the past few days. A patent filing office was an individual business, but a patent corporation established by a few patent attorneys was like a law firm.

Bzz.

Lee Hae-Won’s phone rang.

“Hello?” She picked up.

—Hello. My name is Ryu Young-Joon. I’m a scientist at A-Gen.

“Yes, Hello.”

—I got your contact information from Mr. Park Joo-Hyuk. Would it be possible to set up a meeting about filing a patent?

Lee Hae-Won glanced at her Google calendar that was on her computer. It was basically empty.

“I am free, but Thursday and Friday between one and four o’clock would be best this week.”

—I'm sorry, but could we meet on the weekend? I can only do it on the weekends.

“The weekend?”

—Tomorrow, if possible.

Lee Hae-Won took a second to think about it, then replied, “Alright. I'll schedule a meeting for tomorrow. Is one o'clock good?”

—Sure. What's the address?

“It's Hae-Won International Patent Office, Inhun-dong, Gwanak-gu.”

That wasn't too far from Young-Joon's house.

—Alright. I'll see you then.

Young-Joon ended the call.

There were two reasons why he was moving up the date so quickly. The obvious reason was that the faster he did this, the faster he would be able to earn money. The second reason—although it would never happen—was to prevent anyone at Reaction Chemistry or Cell Bio from stealing his drug, as it was safe if he filed a patent beforehand.

As Young-Joon put his phone in his pocket, Park Joo-Hyuk, who was sitting beside him asked, “What did she say?”

“We're meeting tomorrow.”

“Let's go together.”

“Why?”

“I need to translate legal terms for a STEM nerd like you.”

“She will probably do it.”

“No. It's going to be a disaster if you talk to Hae-Won alone. It's going to be as bad as the trade war between the US and China at the least. If you start rambling on and explaining, Hae-Won's not going to be able to cut you off

because she's nice, and she's going to be super frustrated. And you're not going to be able to understand what she is saying right away, either."

"When did I ramble?" Young-Joon asked.

"You remember when you went on a group blind date with the girls from Sehyun University, and they rejected both of us because you started explaining why the DNA double helix structure was more durable than RNA..."

"Hey, why are you bringing that up now? When are you going to stop bringing that up! It's been ten years."

"Whatever. Let's go together."

"Okay, be honest with me. You're not a lawyer, you're jobless, right? How does a lawyer have this much free time on his hands?"

"It's only been two weeks since I finished my six-month probation period at the Korean Association of Lawyers. I need to enjoy my freedom a little bit longer."

"Ah, fine. Do whatever you want."

"But I'll take you."

"You should've mentioned that first. We have to be there by one o'clock. You're going to pick me up sometime in the morning, right?"

"Okay."

Park Joo-Hyuk snapped his fingers and happily agreed.

* * *

It was one o'clock on Sunday.

"Hello."

Young-Joon entered the attorney's office.

"Hey! It's been a while. How have you been?" Park Joo-Hyuk greeted Lee Hae-Won with a glad smile.

"Oh! Joo-Hyuk oppa, you're here, too."[3]

Lee Hae-Won walked out with a cheery smile on her face.

“I came because I wanted to see your face, Hae-Won. Oh, this is Ryu Young-Joon. He’s an associate scientist at the A-Gen lab.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Attorney Lee Hae-Won.”

“Nice to meet you. My name is Ryu Young-Joon.”

“Then, shall we talk about the patent? Are you applying for a new drug?”

“Yes, I’m developing a new treatment for the flu. It’s one drug. I want to file a patent.”

“Shouldn’t we start by discussing the consultation fee?” Park Joo-Hyuk butted in.

“It’s alright. I don’t need a consultation fee. Since you’re a friend of Joo-Hyuk oppa’s. Can I ask what stage of development you are in?” Lee Hae-Won asked.

“I am synthesizing the new drug right now,” Young-Joon replied.

“...”

Lee Hae-Won tilted her head in confusion.

“So, there isn’t any data about testing yet?” she asked.

“But I can propose a molecular biological mechanism that shows its treatment effect as a biological formulation. I want to file a patent with the concept first. Add the data when I edit it.”

“Hm... It is possible, but...”

Filing a patent for a drug could be done this way, but it only applied to when it was clear that the drug would succeed. People usually filed a patent for a drug after seeing some promising data from cell experiments and then added data after doing some animal testing, as there was almost a hundred percent chance that they would fail if they had no data whatsoever.

But if Young-Joon was saying that he was just starting to synthesize the drug, it meant that he didn’t even have cell experimental data.

'Where is he getting the confidence to file a patent, let alone think the drug will work?'

"I can do it, right?" Young-Joon asked again as Lee Hae-Won looked confused. magic

"Pardon?" Lee Hae-Won said.

"The patent."

"Yes... You can. But you need to have experimental data in a year if you just file it with the concept alone. If you don't, the concept will also be penalized a little. That's why you need to think about it."

"It won't take a year. I will have data in about a month."

"A month?!" Lee Hae-Won exclaimed. "I thought you were still synthesizing the drug?"

"It's a very effective drug, so the experiments will probably succeed right away. So, I want to prepare all the paperwork beforehand so that we can edit and publish the patent right away once the data comes out."

"Alright. I will give you the papers that you need. You have to write a short paragraph about the mechanism of the drug you are publishing, and there are other things you need to fill out. I'll highlight them."

"Can I fill some of it out while I'm here?" Young-Joon asked.

He had nothing better to do at home, and it was better for him to be here so that he could ask the patent attorney right away when he ran into something he didn't know. However, Park Joo-Hyuk butted in before Lee Hae-Won could answer.

"A patent attorney is paid by the hour. You're going to go bankrupt if you sit here and fill it out."

"Haha, it doesn't matter. I have no customers anyways," Lee Hae-Won said as she shook her hand.

Young-Joon glanced around. It didn't seem like this place was all that busy, looking at the amount of documents on the desks or shelves.

“How much will the attorney’s fee be?” Young-Joon asked.

“Should we do one million five hundred won?” Lee Hae-Won asked.

“Why are you asking me? Isn’t it fixed?” Young-Joon replied.

Lee Hae-Won looked flustered.

“Oh, maybe... I actually haven’t done this a lot.”

Young-Joon glanced at Park Joo-Hyuk, doubtful if he could trust her.

“Don’t worry. She’s good,” Park Joo-Hyuk said to him. “But I guess she doesn’t get a lot of clients. I really don’t understand.”

He shrugged.

“It’s because I’m young, I guess,” Lee Hae-Won said.

“How can they look down on you because you’re young? You have better memory and better problem-solving when you’re younger. Everything’s better.”

“Most of the people who come here as clients are either senior or executive managers at their company. I guess I’m not that trustworthy to people that old.” Lee Hae-Won explained.

“When they come in, they ask if there’s anyone more experienced, and then they leave.”

“If this goes well, I’ll keep giving you work,” Young-Joon said.

“Do you even have anything to give her?” Park Joo-Hyuk asked.

“New drugs will keep being developed as long as diseases still exist.”

“I’m asking whether those new drugs will be yours.”

“They will be mine if this goes well. Anyway, I would appreciate your help.”

“Of course! You can count on me.” Lee Hae-Won replied with determination.

Ring!

Young-Joon's phone rang.

"Hello?" Young-Joon took the phone call as he was filling out the documents.

—Doctor Ryu?

"Yes, who is this?"

—Wait, we didn't exchange numbers? How come I have your number? It's me, Jung Hae-Rim.

"Oh! Yes, sunbae. Is there something you have to tell me?"

—How did you do it?

"Pardon?"

—I came in today to make the presentation for the year-end seminar and... I took a look to see if maybe, and...

Jung Hae-Rim stammered.

—The cells you made grew from the culture medium. It really looks like embryonic stem cells... Is it?

1. A batch refers to a group of students, typically university, that entered in a certain year. It is similar to the "Class of ***", but it refers to when students enter university, not graduate. ?

2. a small, cheap place to stay ?

3. Oppa is an informal way that younger women refer to older men. It is usually used when they are friends or family. ?

Chapter 14: Year-end Seminar (1)

Although Jung Hae-Rim spoiled the big news, the Life Creation Department was quite shocked when they heard that Young-Joon's experiment succeeded on Monday morning.

Park Dong-Hyun saw the growth of the embryonic stem cell colony in the plate, and all he could do was admire it with his mouth wide open. He looked like a primitive person who had just discovered fire.

Koh Soon-Yeol, on the other hand, froze when he saw the dish and left the room, mumbling something to himself with his Kohaku statue in his hand.[1]

Then, he quietly whispered to Young-Joon about an hour later when they ran into each other, “Um, Ryu Young-Joon-kun, are you from the future?”

“What?”

“Are you from the future? So like, I was wondering if you’re from a hundred years into the future, but you rolled off a cliff or something and ended up here.”

“... I’m not.”

Although, Young-Joon did have an all-knowing dictionary about molecular biology rather than future knowledge in his head.

Young-Joon gathered pictures of the embryonic stem cell colony. The pictures were automatically taken in one-hour intervals over the weekend; it was good evidence for morphological changes in cells. However, he needed more evidence that these were embryonic stem cells that had dedifferentiated from a normal cell line to an embryo cell line.

Young-Joon said to the team, “We’re going to get really busy from now on. Could all of you help me? The presentation is on Friday, right? We have to get data to prove that these are really embryonic stem cells before then.”

“W-what should I do? RT-PCR?” Park Dong-Hyun asked.[2]

“Yes. After I extract all the RNA from the cells first, could you reverse transcribe it and do exome sequencing on it?”

“Then, I’ll analyze the DNA methylation,” Jung Hae-Rim added.

A bunch of technical terms began flying around in the room. Everyone began working together right away.

These people hadn’t produced any significant results for a while and were doing nothing but beating a dead horse, but it wasn’t because they weren’t skilled. All of them were experts; they all knew exactly what they had to do, and had the brains to do it.

Young-Joon nodded in satisfaction.

“Thank you. I’ll leave it to you two. Then, I will work on differentiating this embryonic stem cell into a muscle cell. It’s going to be perfect if we can do that.”

The cell was currently an embryonic stem cell, but it was originally a kidney cell. Young-Joon had made it into an embryonic stem cell, and now he was going to differentiate it into a muscle cell, a completely different cell type. If Young-Joon succeeded in doing that, no one would be able to object; it would be irrefutable data.

However, Park Dong-Hyun stopped Young-Joon as he was about to begin his experiment.

“No. You need to make the presentation data, Doctor Ryu. And you have to file for a patent. Please go consult a patent attorney. Soon-Yeol!”

“Alright.”

Koh Soon-Yeol raised his head.

“Please differentiate this cell into a muscle cell. No one will be able to say anything if we succeed at that.”

“*Ore ni makasero!*” Koh Soon-Yeol replied.

“What does that mean?”

“Leave it to me!”

“...Thank you. Let’s finish this and get the Award for Exceptional Performance.”

Young-Joon left it to Koh Soon-Yeol and began working on the presentation material.

Even if the experiment went perfect, he needed an explanation for it; he needed to be able to explain why he chose SOX2, cMyc, OCT4, and KTF4 as the genes for dedifferentiation and what their specific functions were.

Of course, this wasn’t completely necessary. Some anticancer drugs that people took had unclear mechanisms as well; they just took it because it was effective. Still, it was definitely better if the mechanism had a clear explanation.

Young-Joon began to write explanations for the four genes. Of course, he was using his fitness and just copying down what Rosaline's status window was telling him to do.

'The gene SOX2 controls the expression of another gene called DKK1 to control the Wnt signaling pathway; it maintains the ability of an adult stem cell to differentiate...'

Young-Joon left space for data that he didn't have yet and just wrote down the explanations. He added pictures of the cell colony and finished the slides one by one.

* * *

For three days, Park Dong-Hyun, Jung Hae-Rim and Koh Soon-Yeol stayed late at work on their own. It was the process of completing the data of a successful experiment. It was hard, but thinking of how the lab directors and the executive managers of the other departments would react when they presented this crazy data at the seminar gave them strength.

"I got the methylation data."

The first to come was Jung Hae-Rim. She sent Young-Joon an excel file and ran over to explain every single detail to him.

"I compared the methylated areas of the DNA. The first data set is the data from actual embryonic stem cells made from an embryo in Japan six years ago, and the second data set is from the induced pluripotent stem cells you made, Ryu Young-Joon."

Simply put, it was a comparative analysis of data to prove that what Young-Joon made were really embryonic stem cells, which had been created before.

"It's the same," Young-Joon said to Jung Hae-Rim.

"I know, right? Doctor Ryu! It's amazing! Everything lines up with nothing out of place! Insane!" Jung Hae-Rim shouted in an excited voice.

"Doctor Ryu!"

That was when Park Dong-Hyun ran into the room.

"I got the data from the RT-PCR. It's a collection of the expression levels of genes. We analyzed a hundred thousand types of RNA made from twenty thousand types of genes."

"How is it?" Young-Joon asked.

"I sent you an excel file. Pull it up."

When Young-Joon opened it up, a graph showed up, just like what Jung Hae-Rim sent him.

"I mapped it on the total RNA database, and look. The first data set is from embryonic stem cells from a real embryo, and the second data set is yours, Doctor Ryu. Exactly the same, right?"

"Yes."

"You succeeded."

"Oh my..."

The three of them were silent for a moment. Park Dong-Hyun gulped.

"Doctor Ryu, how did the patent filing go?"

For the past few days, Young-Joon was preparing to file a patent while making the presentation material. He had already requested it to the patent law office that manages Lab Six and finished the paperwork.

"I already did it. There's nothing for me to do at the moment, and I'm just waiting for a call from the office."

"Alright. Doctor Ryu, what are you going to do?" Park Dong-Hyun asked Young-Joon.

"Pardon?"

"If you present an item like this, it's not just going to be the Exceptional Performance Award. You're going to be either promoted or transferred to a new department, probably the Stem Cells Department."

"I won't transfer. I don't want to move since I just got here. Personally, I want to be promoted and get a bonus. I want to have a team dinner or something."

“A-Gen does a lot of bad things, but they give a lot of bonuses to employees who show results. But from what I think, this technology is something that could change the trend of medicine in ten years. I don’t know how the management and lab directors of A-Gen will see it, but I think that your bonus is going to be as much as your salary.”

“Woah...” Jung Hae-Rim exclaimed.

“Should we split it?” Young-Joon asked.

Jung Hae-Rim quickly turned over to Young-Joon.

“What do you mean? You did everything, Doctor Ryu.”

“The only reason I can present is because you guys made the data.”

“You don’t have to do that.”

Park Dong-Hyun explained, “The bonus is what you get individually, and another bonus will be given to our department separately.”

“Really?”

“Of course. Just organize the data well. Call me if you need any help on anything,” Park Dong-Hyun said to Young-Joon.

“So, what happened to differentiating with the muscle cell?”

“Hm... Koh Soon-Yeol is practically living in the lab,” Park Dong-Hyun told the others.

“But I don’t think it has worked.”

“That’s the hard evidence we need...”

* * *

Friday morning, the grand conference room of Lab One in the A-Gen headquarters was busy with preparations for the seminar. magic

Usually, scientists wore casual attire at work; how could they carry out experiments while wearing suits and dresses? Shorts and tights were

forbidden as they did not protect against hazardous reagents if they splashed onto them, but a lot of people wore t-shirts and jeans as well.

However, everyone wore formal clothing today. The year-end seminar: it was the most important and the most tiresome day for the scientists at A-Gen.

Click.

Kim Hyun-Taek and the scientists of Lab One came in through the door.

“Hello, sir!”

Scientists from different labs came up to him and tried to greet him first.

Kim Hyun-Taek was acknowledged by others as the best scientist at A-Gen, and he was extremely powerful. There was a good chance that he would become the next CTO when the current one, Nicholas Kim, retired. He was just a lab director right now, but everyone thought that he would rise to a position where he would control and manage all the labs of A-Gen in a few years.

Of course, the Anticancer Drug Research Department, one of the best departments in A-Gen, was behind Kim Hyun-Taek’s success; they were A-Gen’s key players, like Messi or Ronaldo. They were responsible for all the achievements of Lab One, and they carried all their other departments.

The item that they developed this time was also incredible; in collaboration with the Mobile Diagnostic Device Research Department, they had created a diagnostic system that could diagnose stomach cancer early. With one drop of blood, it could analyze the DNA and determine whether someone had stomach cancer or not. It had an accuracy level of ninety-two percent, and a sensitivity level of ninety-six percent. They needed to make it more precise, but it was still pretty efficient.

They hadn’t even presented yet, but the news spread. The Anticancer Drug Research Department and the Mobile Diagnostic Device Research Department were receiving everyone’s attention and envy.

“Oh? Where did you get the coffee?”

Lead Scientist Hyun Mi-Ju, who came in a little late, asked Senior Scientist Kim Hyun-Seok about his coffee.

“It’s at the entrance,” Kim Hyun-Seok replied.

“Is it good?”

“I think they got it from Starbucks. It tastes like Starbucks.”

“It’s not my favorite, but I should grab a cup. There’s a bit of time before the seminar starts, right?”

“Lab Six isn’t even here yet. Go grab one.”

Hyun Mi-Ju ran into Park So-Yeon as she walked into the conference hall. She was a Scientist of the Mobile Diagnostic Device Research Department who dated Young-Joon. She had a small and pretty face; she was called the prettiest one in her department from the moment she joined the company. She usually did not wear makeup when she worked, but she took her time to put makeup and perfume on today.

“So-Yeon, you look nice today for the seminar,” Hyun Mi-Ju said to Park So-Yeon when she saw her.

“Haha. It’s one of the only opportunities for me to wear a skirt.”

“You contributed a lot when we developed the stomach cancer diagnosis system. I’m sure you’ll be rewarded something big this time.”

“I really hope so. But it only happened because you and the Anticancer Drug Research Department pinpointed the cancer gene markers well.”

Hyun Mi-Ju poured herself a cup of coffee.

“But So-Yeon, do you know if Lab Six is here yet?”

“I’m not sure.”

“Isn’t Young-Joon there?”

“...”

“Is it awkward or anything when you see each other? It hasn’t been long since you guys broke up, right?”

“It’s fine. It’s not like I did anything wrong.”

“The Life Creation Department... I wonder how much they will get criticized today. I’m worried for them.” Hyun Mi-Ju spoke with a chuckle. She was saying that she was worried, but it looked like she kind of enjoyed it.

“I just hope it doesn’t get too hostile in there. But doesn’t Lab Six have a well-performing team as well?”

“The Health Food Department? They’re Lab Six’s hope.”

“What do they do there?”

“They do a lot of stuff, probiotics and vitamins and other things. But it’s okay. Whatever they bring, it’s not going to be as good as the stomach cancer diagnosis system. The Exceptional Performance Award is either going to go to Anticancer or the Diagnosis Department.”

“Hm. There’s a rumor that the Anticancer Department has another card up their sleeve other than the stomach cancer diagnosis system.”

Hyun Mi-Ju covered her mouth and laughed as Park So-Yeon asked.

“I wonder. I’m not too sure.”

Click!

The main entrance of the conference room opened, and a group of scientists walked in. They were scientists from Lab Six.

1. Kohaku is an anime character from *Dr. Stone*. ?

2. RT-PCR is a laboratory technique that is used to measure the amount of a specific RNA. ?

Chapter 15: Year-End Seminar (2)

People usually gathered freely for the year-end seminar. If all the scientists at the lab were close to each other, they would rent a bus and go together. If the departments all worked individually without a lot of joint projects, they would go separately by department. It was the latter for Lab Six.

Choi Myung-Joon and Seo Yoon-Ju of the Health Food Department arrived at the conference and walked over to where the coffee was. They greeted Hyun Mi-Ju.

“Heya~ Lead Scientist Hyun, it’s been a while.”

Choi Myung-Joon greeted her and shook her hand.

“Hello. How have you been?” Hyun Mi-Ju asked.

“Great. Are there any outstanding achievements from Lab One this year?”

“Haha, just wait and see. We have something huge. We did an important project with Scientist Park’s team over here,” Hyun Mi-Ju said to Choi Myung-Joon as she put her hand on Park So-Yeon’s shoulder and pulled her close.

“We also did something big with Scientist Seo over here, too,” Choi Myung-Joon replied with a chuckle.

“Is that so? It looks like our departments have bright futures. You guys should get to know each other since you are both young scientists. Both of you will lead the company in the future.”

“Haha, Yoon-Ju here is already leading our team. She contributed a lot in creating this year’s achievements.”

“Is that so? Do you have something good?” Hyun Mi-Joo asked.

“Similar to the year before. You said the Anticancer Drug Research team made something important. Can you tell me in advance?”

“Haha, you can see it when we present it later. The Award for Exceptional Performance is going to be ours this year.”

“Now that I think of it, a celebrity in our lab who has only been at A-Gen for a year said that their team was going to get the award.” Choi Myung-Joon mentioned.

“Celebrity?”

“The person who cursed Lab Director Kim Hyun-Taek in the face.”

“...”

“Ryu Young-Joon?”

“Yes.”

“Ahaha!”

Hyun Mi-Ju burst out in laughter. Park So-Yeon also covered her mouth and lowered her head, trying to keep in her laughter.

“Did Young-Joon say that?” Hyun Mi-Ju asked.

“Yes. That’s what he said.”

“Pfft... Well, Young-Jun is good, but... *Chuckle...* Oh my, what should we do about that rascal? It’s both funny and pitiful.”

“How was he at your department?” Choi Myung-Joon asked.

“He was smart and was good at his job. He was fine, but the problem was that he was too uptight. People don’t keep their mouths shut about the company being corrupt because they’re bad people, right? It bothered people that he thought he was better than everyone else. Going on and on about research ethics and whatnot. Phew, *just an amazing scientist, really.*”

“Haha, he was kind of like that in Lab Six as well. He had a little bit of conflict with Yoon-Ju over here, and it took a weird turn.”

“And no matter how great they are, it’s still the Life Creation Department. How would they get the award?”

“We laughed a while about it, too. I was starting to get worried about his well-being.”

“Hahaha!”

As the three of them were trying to calm their laughter, the main entrance doors opened, and the Life Creation Department came in.

“Hello.”

Park Dong-Hyun and Jung Hae-Rim walked into the conference room and grabbed some coffee.

“Hello.”

Hyun Mi-Ju, Choi Myung-Joon, and Park So-Yeon slowly approached and greeted them.

“Hello, it’s been a while.” Park Dong-Hyun returned the greeting.

“Where is Doctor Ryu Young-Joon?” Choi Myung-Joon asked.

“He’s on his way.”

“The seminar is starting soon.”

“Don’t worry. He’ll be here soon.”

“Koh Soon-Yeol isn’t here either? I need my dry cleaning fee,” Seo Yoon-Ju said to them.

Choi Myung-Joon chuckled.

“See you inside,” Park Dong-Hyun replied.

He grabbed his coffee and walked to their table. The Life Creation Department’s seats were at the very end of the conference room. They only had five chairs even though they had six people. One of the chairs was a cheap one without a back to it, which looked like something someone would bring with them for fishing. The organizers were purposefully trying to mess with them, but the Life Creation Department wasn’t very angry.

“You arrived before us.”

There were two more superiors in the Life Creation Department: there were Principal Scientist Cheon Ji-Myung and Lead Scientist Bae Sun-Mi. They had both been assigned to Cheonan, but they were doing work completely unrelated to their department. magic

They were helping the GMO Development Department by harvesting genetically modified winter spinach. A-Gen just labeled it as helping the GMO Development Department, but it really was just a way to insult them.

How would doctors who spent their entire lives reading papers and had twenty years of experience with experimentation feel if they were told to go harvest spinach in the middle of winter at a farm? It wasn’t about thinking one job was more valuable or sophisticated than the other; it was about how insulting it was to suddenly assign a professional of a certain subject to do something completely unrelated to their field of expertise.

They had to work outside, shivering in the cold, without proper equipment. And there was no way that other people would stay at a company if they were called slow or stupid while doing something they had never done before. However, they endured it.

“We’re glad you’re back,” Park Dong-Hyun said. He glanced at Cheon Ji-Myung and Bae Sun-Mi with pity.

“We left a lot of unfilled gaps in our work because we left so suddenly, right? You did well, Doctor Park. How did the preparations go for today’s presentation?”

“Well, we finished making the slides.”

Park Dong-Hyun handed Cheon Ji-Myung a USB. Normally, it was the rule for the principal scientist from each department to present. However, Principal Scientist Cheon Ji-Myung didn’t even have a chance to look at the presentation files yet as they could not send it out of the company until this morning because of the security system, and because Cheon Ji-Myung was up until one o’clock in the morning harvesting spinach.

“*Sigh...*”

Park Dong-Hyun explained it to him on the phone, but he wasn’t confident at all. He added some more bad news.

“There’s one problem. The slides in this USB were made from data from two weeks ago.”

“What are you talking about?”

Cheon Ji-Myung frowned.

“We were really busy for the past two weeks with a different project,” Park Dong-Hyun replied.

“Man, did you guys harvest spinach, too?” Bae Sun-Mi asked like she felt bad for them.

“It’s nothing like that. The new member of our department started a new project on his own, but it hit the jackpot, so we were all over the place because we needed to get data for that.”

“Jackpot?”

“I’m sorry for not telling you in advance. We got the data just a couple weeks ago so... I was doubtful at first, but I became really busy once it became clear.”

“What are you talking about? Where is that new member?”

“Um...” Park Dong-Hyun hesitated.

At eight o’clock in the morning before heading to the seminar hall, Park Dong-Hyun, Jung Hae-Rim and Young-Joon were finalizing their presentation data at their office. They put data about Park Dong-Hyun’s life creation project first, then put the data about the embryonic stem cells Young-Joon made after it. The goal was to quickly go over the first part, as it was easy for them to be attacked for it, and come down from the stage with a huge round of applause by emphasizing the later part.

But as they almost finished editing their slides...

“*Kiseki-yo!*”

Koh Soon-Yeol ran into the office all out of breath.

“What is it?” Park Dong-Hyun turned to face him and asked.

“It differentiated into a muscle cell!”

“It differentiated?”

Young-Joon and Jung Hae-Rim shouted and shot up from their seats.

“Wait.”

Park Dong-Hyun quickly calculated the time in his head. It was too late to add that data to their presentation now, but it was evidence much too powerful to give up.

Right now, the only data in their presentation was that they reverted a regular cell into an embryonic stem cell. But what if they were to say that they were able to differentiate that back into a heart muscle cell? That would complete the storyline of their experimental data. With this, they could argue that this technology could be used to treat patients who needed a heart transplant.

Instead of looking for an organ donor and waiting, they could just swab the inside of a patient's mouth, grow a heart, and transplant that into the patient.

A technology that only seemed possible in science fiction was now possible.

"Sunbaes, this presentation will be worth half as much if the data that the cell differentiated into a heart muscle cell isn't included," Young-Joon exclaimed.

"You're right." Park Dong-Hyun agreed and nodded. He added, "Let's do this. Doctor Ryu, stay here with Soon-Yeol and organize the data to create a new part for the embryonic stem cell."

Jung Hae-Rim looked shocked as he told everyone the plan.

"Are you crazy? We have so little time right now that we should be on a taxi headed to the conference hall right now."

"I know, but we can't exclude that data. And our lab will most likely be the last one to present."

She was even more shocked.

"So are you saying that we should enter during the seminar?"

"That's the best we can do."

"What if it becomes our turn before Young-Joon gets there?"

"That is why Hae-Rim, you, will go first to prevent that worst-case scenario," Park Dong-Hyun replied.

"..."

"We're going to give Manager Cheon the data about the life creation experiment. If the situation you said happens, he will talk about the data from that experiment and buy us some time. I'll call Doctor Ryu and let him know. When that happens, you stop everything you are doing and call a taxi with the stuff you have done. It takes twenty minutes from here to the conference room, and Manager Cheon can hold them off for more than thirty minutes."

There was nothing but silence between the four people.

“What do you think? I’m not forcing you, though. Even if we take out the data about the cell differentiating into a heart muscle cell, this can still be an excellent presentation.”

“Then let’s take it out.”

Young-Joon was firm in his decision. Park Dong-Hyun was surprised as it was a bit out of character; considering Young-Joon’s personality, he thought that Young-Joon would ask to go all in even if they were biting off more than they could chew.

“Why?”

“If what Dong-Hyun sunbae says really happens, I have to interrupt and come up onto the stage while Manager Cheon presents.”

“You can. You can’t even do that when you called Kim Hyun-Taek human garbage right to his face?”

“I can do that, but how would that make Manager Cheon feel?”

“ ... ”

“How bad would he feel if a new member ran the stage to present this huge accomplishment while he would have just been berated?”

“ ... ”

Park Dong-Hyun, Jung Hae-Rim and Koh Soon-Yeol stared at Young-Joon for a few seconds with their jaws on the floor.

“*Pfft.*” Park Dong-Hyun suddenly began laughing.

“Phahaha!” Then, all three of them burst out in laughter.

“Ah! Crazy!”

Jung Hae-Rim hit him on the shoulder, and Park Dong-Hyun even wiped tears from his eyes.

“W-Why?” Young-Joon asked.

“Doctor Ryu, you are... very kind.” Park Dong-Hyun replied.

“*Chuckle...* Ah, I’m trying... Manager Cheon, you lived a good life... Even getting a subordinate that cares about you,” Jung Hae-Rim added as she also wiped tears away from her eyes.

“Thank you for worrying, Young-Joon, but you don’t have to worry about Manager Cheon. I told you that I’ve been at Lab Six for a really long time, right? And I can’t even say that I’m good at ignoring them in front of Manager Cheon.”

Koh Soon-Yeol nodded and interfered.

“He has been in our department for so long, he’s basically rotting...”

“Young-Joon, he may not look like it, but he spent sixteen years at the Life Creation Department. You don’t have to worry about him,” Jung Hae-Rim added again.

“He’s like a professional tanker or something. *Ningen no namae wa tough-desu..*” Koh Soon-Yeol added again. [1]

Park Dong-Hyun gathered up everything with a chuckle.

“And even if you got to the seminar early, you probably won’t be able to explain the embryonic stem cell project to him. Either way, you have to get up there and talk about it yourself, Doctor Ryu. We don’t have the confidence to explain it either. Of course, it’s breaking the rules, but it’s okay since our results are so good that it’ll easily trump small problems like that.”

“ ... ”

“And Manager Cheon was criticized in the company for sixteen years. He would love it if his subordinate embarrassed the lab director. I’m actually worried that he’ll giggle as he thinks about the embryonic stem cells while presenting and getting berated by them.”

“...Okay, let’s do that,” Young-Joon replied.

“Good.”

“The two of you should go now. Soon-Yeol sunbae and I will organize the data as quickly as possible and follow you.”

Park Dong-Hyun grinned, took out the entire part about embryonic stem cells from the presentation files, and pressed save, saving the file as another name.

1. “*Ningen no namae wa tough-desu* means “That human's name is tough.” ?

Chapter 16: Year-End Seminar (3)

“You’re saying he reverted a normal cell into an embryonic stem cell?”

Bae Sun-Mi’s jaw dropped to the floor.

“Wait, wait. Why am I set to play defense?” Cheon Ji-Myung asked, baffled.

“You’re good at that, sir. Please help us out,” Park Dong-Hyun replied.

“Of course. I can even sing if you want. You need like three hours?”

“Thank you. If you begin the presentation, you just have to drag it out until the newbie and Soon-Yeol get there.”

“Of course. Doctor Ryu, was it? Tell him to finish the data, go through it thoroughly, and bring it to me with a cup of coffee.”

Suddenly, loud applause and shouts came from the audience.

“Whoo!”

The MC for the seminar appeared on the stage. It was Kim Hyun-Taek, the lab director of Lab One. He stood up in front of the mic.

“The young ones are usually the ones to do this, but...”

All the scientists in the room laughed as Kim Hyun-Taek chuckled.

“Anyway, I will be your emcee for tonight. First, the CTO would like to say a word. Please greet him with a warm round of applause.”

With Kim Hyun-Taek's introduction, Nicholas Kim came onto the stage with loud cheers.

“Hello, my name is Nicolas. This long year is finally coming to an end. Have you all achieved the goals you planned at the beginning of the year?” Nicholas

asked the crowd. “Personally, I made a goal to stop drinking and smoking and to work out every day for at least an hour... But I failed at all three.”

Nicholas smiled warmly. He looked like the kind grandpa who lived next door, but he used to be a professor at Harvard. He was probably one of the most successful Korean-Americans. He was also one of the best scientists of this time.

“However, I got my annual check-up, and luckily, I’m still healthy. I think this is what our goals and achievements are supposed to be like. You may fail to achieve your goals; that’s what science is about. It’s about looking for that bright light in a dark room, right?”

Nicholas took a deep breath.

“It’s alright if we fail. We still have time. There are about a thousand scientists gathered here. Everyone, there isn’t any problem that we cannot solve if we work together. This seminar is also for us to cooperate.”

The crowd concentrated on Nicholas’ speech.

“Everyone, it will become very intense when we begin discussing our performance. However, I want us to be kind to each other and provide constructive feedback to plan our next goals. Thank you all for your hard work.”

Clap clap clap!

The scientists in the room gave Nicholas a round of applause as he finished his speech.

“The first to present will be Laboratory One,” Kim Hyun-Taek said on stage. “The presenter from the Anticancer Drug Research Department, please come up to the stage.”

Then, Kim Hyun-Taek walked down to the front row where the other lab directors were sitting.

Kim Joo-Yeon, the principal scientist of the Anticancer Drug Research Department, came up to the podium. She opened the presentation file.

“I will present our performance for this year. First of all, we protected the sales of our liver cancer drug, Iloa. When our sales were being threatened by Cellicure, a new liver cancer drug developed by a competitor, one of the employees in our department discovered this and reported it so that our management could take appropriate action right away...”

They cleverly omitted Young-Joon’s name, referring to him as an employee of their department. The political game they played to destroy the better drug from the competitor had become “appropriate action” taken by management.

“We are working on Cellicure, the drug we obtained, in our department,” Kim Joo-Yeon stated. However, she was lying; Cellicure, the treatment for early liver cancer developed by a venture company, was never going to see the light of day.

The scientists of other labs who did not know what was actually going on just listened without any doubt.

The performance of the Anticancer Drug Research Department that followed was incredible, which matched their reputation.

Kim Joo-Yeon first presented a new drug to treat the lesions in the affected area after resecting tumors in breast cancer. Then, she talked about the item they developed with the Mobile Diagnostic Device Research Department. It was their crucial weapon.

“...And so, we are able to diagnose stomach cancer early with an accuracy of ninety-two percent and a sensitivity of ninety-six percent. This technology is very advanced, combining the molecular diagnostic proteins for stomach cancer discovered by the Anticancer Drug Research Department and the Mobile Diagnostic Device Department’s system and kit...”

The scientists and journalists in the room stared at her with interest.

“They really are amazing,” Choi Myung-Joon commented.

“They are,” Seo Yoon-Ju agreed.

“But if they split the achievement with the Mobile Diagnostic Device Department and theirs, they might not be able to win the award.”

However, the Anticancer Drug Research Department had another card up their sleeve. Even the Mobile Diagnostic Device Department did not know about this.

“Along with this, we have developed a new anticancer drug using the stomach cancer markers mentioned earlier,” Kim Joo-Yeon added.

“This new anticancer drug can precisely track the markers of stomach cancer cells. As such, when used on a patient, it can destroy only the cancer cells without touching the healthy stomach cells.”

“Wow!”

This time, the scientists audibly exclaimed in surprise.

It was a new drug for stomach cancer that selectively destroyed cancer cells. Drugs that worked like this were called targeted therapy—they accurately found the target and destroyed only the cancer cells to decrease the level of negative side effects. It was something that a lot of other pharmaceutical companies were aiming to develop. A variety of drugs had been developed already, but they were still lacking.

The scientists stared at Kim Joo-Yeon in awe as she presented the experimental data. The Anticancer Drug Research Department was the first to present, but all the scientists in the room had already determined that they would be the department to win the Award for Exceptional Performance.

“That is the end of our presentation. Are there any questions?”

There was nothing but silence. It was actually quieter because the presentation was so outstanding.

Kim Joo-Yeon, who came down from the podium with a round of applause, stopped by the Mobile Diagnostic Device Department table.

“Sorry that I was hiding a nuclear weapon up my sleeve. The award is ours,” Kim Joo-Yeon said with a chuckle.

“Congratulations. That is definitely enough to get the award. I can’t believe you developed a new target therapy drug. The Award for Excellent Performance will be enough for us,” Song Yu-Ra, the principal scientist from the Mobile Diagnostic Device Department replied with a cheery smile.

The next to present was the Mobile Diagnostic Device Department. They also came down from the podium with equally favorable comments.

But they were both the best departments in A-Gen.

The lab directors began to attack the departments as they presented, starting with the Medical Device Department.

“What would you use that for?”

“Does that even make any money?”

With that, they threw around technical terms and even bluntly asked them what the hell they were thinking doing experiments like that.

The seminar always went like this; the atmosphere got more hostile as it went on.

“They don’t even know the basics of science! Why is the precision of the affected area for that chemical important at all? You can just limit the delivery method locally!”

People like Kim Hyun-Taek even shouted at people.

Doctor Tae Jin-Sung from Laboratory Five came down from the stage. It was finally Laboratory Six’s turn to present. But Young-Joon still hadn’t arrived.

After the four departments of Lab Six presented, Choi Myung-Joon from the Health Food Department, the self-acclaimed MVP of Lab Six, began his presentation.

“Our department is about to launch a new product, which consists of a mixture of pumpkin juice, bellflower juice, and pear juice. A quick explanation of this product...”

Choi Myung-Joon’s presentation went on for about fifteen minutes. It was a pretty good achievement, but the lab directors did not look very happy.

“Didn’t Pfizer release a product that has pumpkin juice, bellflower juice, and pear juice?” Kim Hyun-Tae asked.

Choi Myung-Joon looked a little nervous as he stammered an answer, “That’s right.”

“I’m thinking that they dominated the market first, but do you think it’s beneficial to develop the same product in terms of efficiency?”

“Our product has better nutrients. And the difference in the manufacturing method is that we obtain our pumpkin juice through low-temperature extraction, whereas Pfizer destroys their nutrients through their high temperature. I believe we can win against them in the market because our method makes the drink healthier...”

“That’s what you think.” Kim Hyun-Taek criticized.

“Low-temperature extraction or whatever, the public is not interested in the manufacturing method. I think I say this several times every seminar, but I want our scientists to have some sense of business.”

“ ... ”

“You are not researchers who research at universities. Don’t focus on making a good product; focus on making a product that will sell. How high do you think sales will be from selling that pumpkin juice? Pfizer has a higher brand recognition than us in North America and Europe! You’re going to beat Pfizer with low-temperature extraction? Do you think that makes sense?”

There was fear in the air. It was quite shocking and uncomfortable seeing a manager be berated by lab directors in front of young scientists. However, Kim Hyun-Taek went on.

“Your probiotic sales are down as well, right? Your share in the market was taken little by little after Roche developed a new probiotic and put it on the market. Isn’t that right? What percent are you at right now?”

“...Twenty-two percent,” Choi Myung-Joon replied.

“And the year before?”

“It was at forty-nine percent.”

“At least you know that. But you did not develop a new product?”

“We are working on it...”

“Work on revolutionizing probiotics instead of making something stupid like pumpkin juice. The future industry of health foods will be probiotics.” magic

“We will keep that in mind.”

“Is there anything else to present?”

“...No, sir.”

“Come down. Good work. Next. Lab Six. Who is it?”

“It’s the Life Creation Department.”

Oh Jun-Tae, the lab director of Laboratory Three replied.

“The presenter for the Life Creation Department. Come up.”

“Do we really have to listen to this?” One of the lab directors mocked. The other directors smirked.

Principal Scientist Cheon Ji-Myung slowly headed to the podium.

“We were criticized because of you,” Choi Myung-Joon quietly whispered as he walked by. There was a jinx that the atmosphere always became very hostile before the Life Creation Department presented.

“I will begin the presentation for the Life Creation Department.”

Cheon Ji-Myung opened the presentation file.

A bunch of pictures of cells popped up on the first slide.

“What is that? Are those frog eggs?” Lab Three Director Oh Jun-Tae asked in a mocking tone.

“Hahaha.” The scientists burst out in laughter.

“It is Artificial Cell Rosaline 4.8.

“Alright, let’s hear it. I wonder what kind of shitty data you will go on and on about this time,” Laboratory Two Director Koh Yoo-Sung commented.

Cheon Ji-Myung’s presentation began.

“... Like this, we tested from Rosaline v4.80 to v.4.87, and we created v.4.80 in the following way.”

Cheon Ji-Myung was presenting relatively well, but everything in his presentation was about failing and trying something, and then failing again.

The lab directors sighed, but Cheon Ji-Myung paid no attention to it and went on.

“And if you look here at v.4.87, you can see that the organelles within the cell have stabilized. But the cell membrane was unstable and...”

“Why is the membrane unstable?” Kim Hyun-Taek asked.

“We have tracked down that reason and are trying to alter our experiment accordingly.”

“What do you think the reason is?”

“We are predicting that it is an osmosis of some sort, and we are going to control the salt concentration within and outside the cell.”

“Then you should have done that experiment and brought the completed data,” Koh Yoo-Sung said.

“I wanted to, but...”

“Why didn’t you do that experiment?” Kim Hyun-Taek asked.

“When our department was doing this project, I was in Cheonan for a month to help the GMO Department with their work...”

“Why does that matter!”

Lab Two Director Koh Yoo-Sung screamed. The GMO Department was part of Lab Two.

“Even if you weren’t there, you could have instructed the experiments by phone or email! You couldn’t do that as an executive manager, so you are using your business trip as an excuse?”

Cheon Ji-Myung stayed silent for a bit. To be honest, this attack was completely forced. Even if he did the experiment he was talking about, they would have asked him what he thought about those results. If he didn’t know, they would attack him for not knowing, and if he thought of a reason why, they were just going to attack him about why he didn’t do that experiment.

“Instructing work by email from being away from the frontlines of work for months at a time can cause problems in progress,” Cheon Ji-Myung replied.

The lab directors frowned right away.

“What?”

“Is that his excuse?” Kim Hyun-Taek shouted.

“All our members did the best they could. We just needed more time to solve this problem.”

“Doctor Cheon Ji-Myung, take a look at your data.”

As Kim Hyun-Taek spoke, Cheon Ji-Myung turned to look at the screen.

“Do you think that data is good enough to gather all the scientists at A-Gen and present at a year-end seminar, Doctor Cheon?”

“We cannot throw away any data. We may find something important in the data that we think is insignificant.”

“Stop talking about such principles. We want to see output. What’s in your presentation other than the fact that you failed, and then failed again at fixing it?”

“I’m sorry. We were not good enough,” Cheon Ji-Myung replied politely and briefly. As he did, he glanced at the clock. He had been defending for twenty minutes.

From afar, Park Dong-Hyun was sending him a signal.

‘They’re almost here.’

Chapter 17: Year-End Seminar (4)

“Why do you get paid if you’re not capable?” Kim Hyun-Taek complained.

“Haha, I’m sorry. Instead, I didn’t get a bonus for sixteen years.”

“How can you laugh in this situation?”

“I’m sorry.”

The lab directors sighed. This was how Cheon Ji-Myung acted every time; he was always like this. Even if hurtful words were thrown at him, he just laughed it off and said everything he needed to while still being respectful. He did random assignments like harvesting winter spinach, which was meant to humiliate him, without complaining. No matter how much the lab directors belittled him, berated him, and pushed him away, Cheon Ji-Myung just endured it.

“Doctor Cheon Ji-Myung.” Gil Hyung-Joon, the lab director of Laboratory Six, called him. “What kind of progress have you made in the Life Creation Department in sixteen years?”

“We gave you a report every monthly meeting. In this case, one of our advancements was stabilizing the organelles in the artificial cell, and we think that it has potential if we are able to stabilize the cell membrane from breaking.”

“Shouldn’t you bring some tangible data instead of speculations?”

“We will work harder next time.”

“You say that every year! That’s what’s wrong with you people. Everyone in your team is an idiot. How many doctors do you have there?”

“Five... No, we have six now.”

“You have six people with doctorates, but you can’t do this one thing in sixteen years?”

“To be honest, it’s not that easy. It’s something only the creator can do, right?”

“You think that is something a scientist should be saying?”

“I’m sorry.”

“No, just look at your data! You found nothing. For sixteen years. Can’t you see how it is frustrating for us!?”

“Science is about finding that bright light in a dark room, so we might not get results if we’re unlucky.”

Cheon Ji-Myung borrowed CTO Nicholas Kim’s words.

“Ha!” Kim Hyun-Taek scoffed. “Stop talking about those principles. We are the ones paying you. You are a doctor and have been a scientist for over twenty years, but doesn’t it embarrass you to bring that kind of data every year?”

“I really am sorry. But the thing about research is that...”

“Just! Shut your mouth!” Gil Hyung-Joon slammed his fist on the table.

“You’re being criticized by executives because of how crappy your data is. Stop talking so much and making excuses!” magic

“That is...”

Click!

The doors of the seminar hall opened, and a young man entered. His hair was a mess from running, but he wasn’t out of breath at all.

[Activating Rosaline, who has been metastasized to the lung.]

[Rosaline is beginning to optimize breathing.]

“Oh geez!”

However, the man who followed him inside was about to die. He was on the chubbier side.

“Manager Cheon's on the stage. I think that he is still presenting,” The chubby man said to Young-Joon as he propped up his glasses.

“Thank you.”

Young-Joon stared right at the podium. His eyes met Cheon Ji-Myung’s eyes. He had only seen him in pictures.

Cheon Ji-Myung grinned, and then gave him an okay sign with his hand; he was telling Young-Joon to come up to the stage. Young-Joon walked down the stairs and headed to the stage.

“What?”

“Who is that?”

The scientists murmured.

“What do you think you’re doing!” Gil Hyung-Joon shouted.

“Who are you?!” Koh Yoo-Sung also shouted.

However, Young-Joon ignored them and went up to the podium.

“My part is done. Doctor Ryu, it’s your turn now.” Cheon Ji-Myung whispered into Young-Joon’s ear.

Young-Joon bowed slightly and grabbed the mic.

“I’m Scientist Ryu Young-Joon.” Young-Joon introduced himself to the crowd.

“Scientist?” Koh Yoo-Sung tilted his head in confusion. “Just a scientist? Isn’t that basically an associate manager?”

The crowd whispered noisily.

“I have come up to the stage because I had something to present. I apologize for causing confusion with the abrupt interruption, but I had no choice but to do this in order to present important data from the Life Creation Department,” Young-Joon stood on the podium and spoke into the mic.

“What are you doing?” Kim Hyun-Tae asked.

“Come down from there, Doctor Ryu. It’s not a podium for someone of low rank like you, and we’re in a meeting about the Life Creation Department’s progress.”

“The data that I brought is also our team’s progress.”

“How dare you interrupt when the lab directors are speaking!” Oh Jun-Tae shouted.

“ ... ”

Young-Joon slowly looked down and stared at Nicholas, the CTO. He crossed his legs and made himself comfortable in his chair.

“Let’s hear it,” Nicholas said.

The CTO's words were absolute. The lab directors still looked irritated but soon calmed down.

"Thank you."

Young-Joon inserted his USB, and as he opened the file, a picture of embryonic stem cells appeared on the screen.

"What is that?" Kim Hyun-Taek asked.

"They are embryonic stem cells," Young-Joon replied.

"Why is that here?"

"It's because we made it."

"Ha?"

The lab directors tilted their heads in confusion while sitting in a cocky manner.

"He's crazy. They are really crazy now. Everyone in that department is crazy." Koh Yoo-Sung drew circles with his finger beside his head.

Young-Joon ignored him and began explaining.

"The reason behind why we began this life creation project was because if we create an artificial cell this way, we would be able to transplant it into a patient or grow it into an artificial organ to fix faulty organs or tissue."

Young-Joon added, "And the competitive technology of life creation is embryonic stem cell technology. It is much better and rewarding than our project. If we were to use embryonic stem cell technology, we wouldn't have to take the difficult route of creating life."

Kim Hyun-Taek raised his hand.

"So, you're saying that you studied embryonic stem cells? You really are insane. Where did you get the embryo? You better have a good explanation. Unless it was donated, you used your budget at your disposal for another purpose that was not previously discussed. And if you bought it, you will not be able to avoid criticism of your ethics. The company's position on the issue

has not been decided yet. As such, you should not have acted on your own. This is grounds for severe punishment.”

Young-Joon stared directly at Kim Hyun-Taek.

“We did not use an embryo.”

The lab directors frowned.

“Did you use magic or something?” Oh Jun-Tae mocked him.

“These cells were originally human liver cells. We inserted four genes into the cells and reverted them into embryonic stem cells,” Young-Joon replied and went on to the next slide.

[SOX2, cMyc, OCT4, KTF4]

With the names of the four genes, a picture of the initial liver cells appeared. Then, morphological pictures of the cells taken in one-hour intervals after the injection of the four genes appeared on the screen. As time went on, they started looking more and more like embryonic stem cells.

Silence. The crowd was dead silent like they had frozen. It was like they weren't even breathing. Scientists who knew a little bit about stem cells already had a look of extreme shock on their faces.

‘The advancement of science was sometimes a huge leap in knowledge.’

Sometimes, a discovery transformed the world so greatly that a world without it was completely different from the world after it: for example, the invention of the phone, internet, and airplanes, or the establishment of the theory of evolution, proof that the Earth is round, and the establishment of heliocentrism.

All the scientists in the seminar room knew what the information Young-Joon was presenting meant.

Clang!

One of the people in the Stem Cells Department broke the silence as they dropped their tumbler on the floor from their trembling hands.

Stammering, Oh Jun-Tae asked, “W-Wait. So that... Are you telling us to believe that? You made a normal cell into embryonic stem cells?”

“We are certain,” Young-Joon replied.

“Surely, the morphological pictures look similar to embryonic stem cells. But I think we need more detailed evidence,” Kim Hyun-Taek said.

“We have DNA methylation data and gene expression data as well. Please take a look,” Young-Joon replied.

A comparative analysis of the data was shown on the next slide. The data from the real embryonic stem cells from actual embryos and Young-Joon’s embryonic stem cells matched perfectly.

“ ... ”

“Hm!”

The lab directors were imagining the kind of impact this would have on future medicine.

Of course, it still had a long way to go before it could go through clinical trials. Things like creating an artificial organ or transplanting a lesion and letting it multiply weren’t simple things to do. However, those were things that time would solve; the important thing was that they had overcome a huge obstacle.

This was a trendsetter for future medicine. The lab directors could already draw a huge blueprint for the new procedures large hospitals would be performing in the near future.

Young-Joon stated, “Embryonic stem cell technology has been forgotten for too long because of the huge con that it required an embryo, but we have broken through that limit.”

“ ... ”

“From next year, we are thinking of studying embryonic stem cells as a side project while keeping the life creation project as our main focus.”

“Is there any evidence that it can differentiate into different tissues?” Kim Hyun-Taek criticized.

“There is. That’s why we were late.”

Young-Joon went to the next slide. Now, the embryonic stem cells were differentiating into muscle cells.

“These are cardiac muscle fiber cells.” Young-Joon added, “We can make cardiac muscle if we grow these cells. There is still a long way to go, but it means that theoretically, we can make an artificial heart. Because the embryonic stem cell we made is exactly the same as regular embryonic stem cells made from real embryos, it can differentiate into any type of cell.”

“Can you explain?” Nicholas asked Young-Joon; it was the first time he had spoken after his opening address. The scientists who were sitting near him glanced over.

“Can you explain why it turns into embryonic stem cells if you inject those four genes?”

“Of course,” Young-Joon replied.

It was a question Young-Joon had predicted. He moved on to the next slides, and descriptions of the four genes began to appear one after another.

“The cMyc gene acts to promote cell proliferation and phenotypic change, and binds to histone acetyltransferase...”

Suddenly, Young-Joon began lecturing in the middle of the seminar. Among the technical terms that he was using, some of them were foreign to scientists in the same field as Young-Joon. Even the lab directors could barely follow along.

All one thousand scientists in the room were staring at Young-Joon. He scanned through all of them and continued his lecture.

‘Park So-Yeon...’

Young-Joon’s eyes met her’s. She had long hair before, but it was short now.

Park So-Yeon looked quite confused. Young-Joon looked away.

“...Like this, the undifferentiation of the cell is controlled and completed by the endogenously expressed Nanog and Oct4 and is reverted into an embryonic stem cell state like an embryo. That is all.”

“ ”
...

There was nothing but silence in the seminar room. All the scientists were frozen. The shock was stronger because they were fellow scientists; the more one knew, the more they understood. The members of the Stem Cells Department were just in awe. Even the hot-tempered lab directors could not say anything.

The excellent achievements of the Anticancer Drug Research Department made everyone's jaw drop, but the Life Creation Department's overwhelmingly incredible and almost magical results made everyone shut up.

In the silence...

Clap. Clap. Clap.

Someone began clapping slowly. It was Nicholas, the CTO. Everyone's attention was drawn to him.

“It is truly a technology of the future,” Nicholas commented. “This is what revolutionary means. This is the advancement of technology and what science is about. I didn't think that I would see studies as exceptional as this at our company in my life. What did you say your name was?”

“My name is Ryu Young-Joon, a Scientist,” Young-Joon replied.

Nicholas got up from his seat.

“Scientist Ryu Young-Joon, I guess things like this have disappeared nowadays, but when I was younger, attendees used to give a standing ovation if there was an amazing presentation at a conference or lecture.”

Nicholas added, “As a fellow scientist who studies biology, regardless of the hierarchical relationship between CTO and Scientist, I sincerely thank you.”

Nicholas began clapping. Surprised, other scientists quickly stood up and began clapping.

Chapter 18: Year-End Seminar (5)

A-Gen's standing ovation continued for about three minutes. The clapping did not stop for a while even after Nicholas put his hands down.

After it calmed down a little, Nicholas sat back down in his seat. It didn't really matter to him whether he stayed standing or not, but it was to let the other scientists who were worn out from presenting to sit.

Nicholas asked, "This is a completely different project than what the Life Creation Department has done in the past. Be honest. You started this by yourself, didn't you, Doctor Ryu? Did you achieve this on your own?"

"Yes, I did start this alone, but my department members were incredibly helpful. I wouldn't have been able to do this if I was alone," Young-Joon replied.

Young-Joon wasn't wrong; it would have been impossible to create high-quality data such as this in that short amount of time even with Rosaline's power. To evaluate the members of the Life Creation Department, Park Dong-Hyun, Jung Hae-Rim, and Koh Soon-Yeol were all incredibly skilled. They already knew what kind of data they needed in order to make the presentation logical even before Young-Joon asked them, and they gave it to Young-Joon in two or three days, perfectly organized. Even the Anticancer Drug Research Department, which was supposed to have the best scientists in the company, did not have people who were as good as them.

Nicholas flashed a smile of satisfaction.

"I didn't know that A-Gen had such a talented individual like you. The bravery and insightfulness to start a project like this... Truly amazing. You look young, Doctor Ryu Young-Joon. May I ask how old you are?"

"I am thirty."

"I look forward to your progress more because you are younger. Did you know this? Most of the Nobel Prize recipients started their work that got them their prize in their forties."

Young-Joon smiled like he was embarrassed when Nicholas mentioned the Nobel Prize. Park Dong-Hyun did mention that this was Nobel Prize-worthy.

Of course, they wouldn't give a young scientist like Young-Joon a Nobel Prize since the years of experience were taken into account as well. However, someone may nominate him for the prize when he had more research experience. In that case, his induced pluripotent stem cells would become a powerful achievement that would support him later on.

To be honest, it was something that made him so happy even just thinking about it in his head. Considering Young-Joon's young age, his chances weren't *that* slim; he was the most likely to receive it among people in his age group, was he not? Nicholas also mentioned the Nobel Prize because he could see it happen.

"Usually, I would have to discuss it with the lab directors, but to be honest, there is nothing to talk about. The Award for Exceptional Performance for this year goes to the Life Creation Department. Doctor Ryu Young-Joon, it is because of you."

"Wait." Kim Hyun-Taek objected as Nicholas finished his sentence. "I'm sorry, but this is something that Doctor Ryu Young-Joon, who was only transferred there about two weeks ago, started on his own. And it seems like Cheon Ji-Myung, their department head, doesn't even know about this project."

"How do you know that he doesn't know?" Nicholas Kim asked.

"He didn't even know about the original projects either," Kim Hyun-Taek replied in a sneering tone.

He glared at Young-Joon, then glanced at Nicholas again.

"This has to be seen as an individual's work. We should recognize Doctor Ryu's contributions, of course. However, the Award for Exceptional Performance is given to an entire department. I do not think the Life Creation Department deserves the award. Yes, the other scientists would have contributed to getting that data, but a scientist must do more than get data," Kim Hyun-Taek said.

"Hm."

"We have the Revolutionary Scientist Award that can be given to the individual. I think that we should give that to Doctor Ryu and award the Award for Exceptional Performance to another department."

"Is that so?"

"Why don't you ask Doctor Cheon Ji-Myung yourself? Whether he thinks he deserves the award as the department head," Kim Hyun-Taek said.

Nicholas rested his chin on his hand and stared at Cheon Ji-Myung with interest.

“What do you think, Doctor Cheon Ji-Myung? As the head of the department, do you think you deserve the honor and privileges of being the leader of a department displaying exceptional performance?”

Young-Joon secretly glanced at Cheon Ji-Myung like he was worried. Cheon Ji-Myung had no idea about this project until today before the presentation. However, because he was the executive manager, he automatically became the interim head of the project on paper, as the position was vacant at the time they submitted the project proposal. Young-Joon couldn't even select his name as his position rank was too low for the system to have it.

Cheon Ji-Myung could reject the award because of the pressure that he was the head of a stem cell project that he knew nothing about and the guilt from not being of any help to his members. That was also what Kim Hyun-Taek was going for.

“...Respected executives, I believe that you all know how greatly Doctor Ryu has contributed to this achievement. Therefore, his individual contributions must be highly appreciated. You should give him the Revolutionary Scientist Award,” Cheon Ji-Hyung replied.

Kim Hyun-Taek scoffed. “Then, the Award for Exceptional Performance should...”

“And I believe the Life Creation Department has the right to receive the Award for Exceptional Performance,” Cheon Ji-Myung said firmly.

Young-Joon barely held in his laughter as he saw Kim Hyun-Taek scowl. Now that Young-Joon thought about it, Cheon Ji-Myung has been the head of the Life Creation Department, which was where the troublemakers of A-Gen went, for sixteen years.

Right now, the debate about which department received the Award for Exceptional Performance was not about evaluating the magnitude of the contribution and its appropriateness—that had already been decided. Right now, he was engaging in political warfare with Kim Hyun-Taek, and Cheon Ji-Myung knew this, too.

Cheon Ji-Myung also knew that in this situation, the executive manager's job was not to back down for not knowing about the project and not being able to manage it but to win the award for his department members. And Cheon Ji-Myung had a strong enough backbone to be bold and declared that they deserved the award when Kim Hyun-Taek was pressuring them.

Nicholas was also chuckling with his head down.

"Doctor Cheon Ji-Myung, do you know anything about that embryonic stem cell project?" Kim Hyun-Taek attacked him fiercely.

"Yes, of course," Cheon Ji-Myung replied respectfully. "As the project manager, I am guiding the future direction of this project. If we improve this technology, we will be able to cut out the stomach and implant an embryonic stem cell in its place to regrow it to treat advanced stomach cancer instead of using an anticancer drug to selectively destroy cancer cells. I imagine that will be easier and more effective. I am thinking of allocating the special research budget with an emphasis on developing this technology, and I am also considering creating a task force that will use the privileges from the award to cooperate with various departments in Lab Six."

Although there wasn't much substance to what Cheon Ji-Myung was saying, he still kept talking. As he did, Kim Hyun-Taek's face became red. The best accomplishment of the Anticancer Drug Research Department—the star of Lab One—this year was a treatment for stomach cancer that selectively worked on cancer cells. Cheon Ji-Myung had covertly attacked Kim Hyun-Taek, saying that the Life Creation Department's creation was much better than his.

"Ahem." Nicholas cleared his throat and interrupted. He already really liked Young-Joon and wanted to give him a bunch of things; he wanted to see what kind of things that young, ingenious scientist would be able to achieve if he had the privileges that came with the Award for Exceptional Performance.

"Surely, an executive manager's job isn't to use a pipette to grow a cell. Doctor Cheon Ji-Myung, please allocate the department's budget like you said, and I hope you guide the project in the right direction," Nicholas said to Cheon Ji-Myung.

"Yes, sir. Thank you." Cheon Ji-Myung bowed towards Nicholas.

“Does anyone else have any objections?” Nicholas asked as he looked at the lab directors.

They were quiet.

After a bit of time, Nicholas opened his mouth.

“Well, the Award for Exceptional Performance has been decided. Now, we should choose what departments will get the other awards.”

Nicholas smiled and went up to the podium.

“Ah, ah.” Nicholas tested the mic and said, “Scientists of A-Gen, good work. We have reached the end of the seminar. We will take a thirty-minute break and then continue the award ceremony here.”

* * *

“Oh my god! This is insane! What should we do! Ahh! We’re really going to get an award!” Jung Hae-Rim was jumping up and down, unable to control her excitement and joy.

“Good work, Doctor Ryu.”

Park Dong-Hyun patted Young-Joon on the back.

“Thank you everyone.”

Young-Joon ran into Bae Sun-Mi as he thanked the other members.

Like Cheon Ji-Myung, he had also never seen Lead Scientist Bae Sun-Mi before. She looked like a middle-aged woman in her forties, and she had a warm, soft vibe to her.

“Hello, Young-Joon. My name is Bae Sun-Mi. I’m a lead scientist.”

“Hello. Nice to meet you.”

Soon after, Principal Scientist Cheon Ji-Myung, who was greeting the heads of other departments, returned.

“Where is he? Our youngest?” He looked around for Young-Joon.

“Doctor Ryu!”

When Cheon Ji-Myung found Young-Joon, he spread his arms wide and ran toward the young scientist.

“Such great work!”

He hugged Young-Joon hard, then asked while letting go, “Seriously, where did this lucky charm come from? What department are you from?”

“I’m from the Anticancer Drug Research department.”

“I see that Kim Hyun-Taek made a huge mistake! Losing a scientist like you! Haha! Just amazing work~”

“Haha, you as well, sir.”

“Did you see Kim Hyun-Taek scowl? Did you see him get angry because Lab One didn’t get it? Ahahaha!” Cheon Ji-Myung laughed.

“I think that’s because you talked about the stomach cancer drug,” Park Dong-Hyun said as he smirked.

“But what kind of actual benefit do we get for the Award for Exceptional Performance?” Young-Joon asked.

“The benefit is huge! That’s why Kim Hyun-Taek was trying to do everything to stop us from getting it,” Cheon Ji-Myung replied.

Jung Hae-Rim explained, “First of all, the department that wins the award gets an extra 1.5 billion won added to their budget. And the superiors usually don’t interfere no matter what kind of project the department chooses to do. They become sort of like an independent department that can work individually as well. On top of that, other departments can’t refuse if the winning department asks for support.”

“Really?” Young-Joon exclaimed.

“The last two aren’t actual company policy like the 1.5 billion won, but it’s kind of like a longstanding tradition.”

“Of course, we don’t know what it will be like for our department. We might keep getting ignored because our image was so shit in the past.” Park Dong-Hyun smiled bitterly.

“I see,” Young-Joon replied.

Now that Young-Joon thought about it, there was one person who wasn’t here.

“What happened to Soon-Yeol-sunbae? We have to go and get money for dry cleaning. The Comme Des Garçons...”

Bae Sun-Mi stared at Jung Hae-Rim with squinted eyes. She looked at her as if it was awkward having Koh Soon-Yeol and Comme Des Garçons in the same sentence.

Jung Hae-Rim burst into laughter and explained to Bae Sun-Mi what had happened.

“He left for the washroom a little while ago,” Park Dong-Hyun said.

“Oh really? I also have to go to the washroom.”

As Young-Joon left the seminar hall, he pulled out his phone. Going to the washroom was just an excuse for him to make a phone call. He read the message he had gotten earlier.

[This is Cell Bio. We got the reagent that came in your name from Reaction Chemistry. We want to call you beforehand to confirm the experiment before we begin. Please give us a call when you have about ten minutes.]

Young-Joon pressed their number and called.

—Hello, this is Cell Bio.

“Hello. My name is Ryu Young-Joon. I requested the experiment.”

—Oh, yes! Hello, doctor. You emailed us the experimental design before, but we wanted to confirm it before we began.

“Yes, thank you.”

—This is a new drug for the flu, correct?

“Yes.”

—We use the bird flu virus H9N2 to infect MDCK cells, and then treat it with your candidate drug to see whether the virus stops multiplying, correct?

“Yes, that’s correct. Please dissolve the candidate drug in DMSO when you treat the cells. Ten milligrams of the drug should melt at room temperature for one milliliter of DMSO.”

—Alright.

“When can I get the experiment results?”

—We were already doing a base experiment of infecting the multiplied cells with the virus before your candidate drug arrived, so we can treat it right away. You should be able to get data in about a week or so.

‘Next week.’

This was why Young-Joon liked Cell Bio; if he had commissioned it to a company that wasn’t very capable, they would have started multiplying the cells and infecting them after Young-Joon’s drug had arrived. If so, it would have taken at least three weeks. It was a good choice that he commissioned it to Cell Bio.

“Thank you. Please tell me when you get the results.”

Young-Joon ended the call.

That was it; all that he needed to do now was add the experimental data on the patent Attorney Lee Hae-Won would have filed and get it published after evaluations. Then, he was going to sell the new drug to a pharmaceutical company. He could also sell it to A-Gen, but he would need to think about it. If he got to that point, he could escape this damn poverty for good. magic

‘Let’s think about what to do next with Rosaline’s power after this.’

His father, who was working as security at an apartment, and his mother, who had hurt her knee tendon but was still working at a restaurant with a limp, would never have to work again. Young-Joon could also tell Ryu Ji-Won to stop tutoring part-time and focus on studying. Young-Joon could pay off all his

debt, give Park Joo-Hyuk the money he owed him, and move out of a basement unit.

'Should I buy a car?'

Just thinking about it made him happy.

"..."

When Young-Joon usually thought about a great future like this, there was one woman who was always in the picture.

'Park So-Yeon.'

Young-Joon had seen her during his presentation at the seminar, and she had gotten even prettier in a month.

'I got worse because I was drinking all that time.'

Of course, Rosaline fixed it all, but he felt that it was a little unfair for some reason.

Tap tap.

Someone tapped on Young-Joon's shoulder from behind.

"Hey."

It was Park So-Yeon.

Chapter 19: Year-End Seminar (6)

"Yeah."

Young-Joon turned around and faced Park So-Yeon. Seeing her face again roused a myriad of emotions within him at once, like the scum of love, betrayal, and anger. To his surprise, he wasn't glad to see her, nor did he miss her. Young-Joon pushed those feelings down in his heart like he was compressing a full garbage bag.

"It's been a while," Young-Joon said.

“Yeah. I think it’s been about a month... How have you been?” Park So-Yeon asked.

“You think I would have been well?”

“...I’m sorry.”

“Whatever.”

“I feel like you changed a little.”

“What?”

“Before, you were sweet and kind, sort of like a puppy.”

“Really? I was?” Young-Joon reacted like he was surprised. “I was like a puppy when I was the one who cursed at Lab Director Kim Hyun-Taek?”

“Well, that was when you were really mad. You’re not usually like that. You were wagging your tail and running around when you first heard that A-Gen bought that liver cancer drug from that venture company.”

Park So-Yeon faintly smiled.

“Then maybe I am mad right now,” Young-Joon said.

“Yeah, you’re kinda acting the same as when you swore at Director Kim,” Park So-Yeon said.

“Really?”

“Are you still mad? At me?” Park So-Yeon asked.

“What do you want?”

“It was hard for me after we broke up, too.”

“ ... ”

“You did really succeed this time, but you will have to make peace with Director Kim if you want to succeed in the company.”

“Maybe.”

“My seniors and I can help mitigate things between you and him.”

“So?”

“I’ll help you out a lot. Oppa, let’s date again.”

“ ... ”

Young-Joon silently stared at Park So-Yeon. She was clinging to him like she was hung up on him, but there wasn’t a hint of nerves or fear in her face. She was confident, and it was because Young-Joon really loved her. Park So-Yeon was someone who had always been on the receiving end of love. As foreign as this situation was to her, she did not think that she would be rejected.

“If you want to do something like a joint departmental project with your iPSCs, talk to our executive manager.”[1]

“It’s nothing like that!” Young-Joon shouted.

Park So-Yeon was startled.

“It’s true. I regretted it a lot after we broke up like that,” Park So-Yeon said.

“Then why did you break up with me like that? Without even coming to see me?”

“...I thought it would be harder for me if I saw you. I have a dream at this company, but I had a lot of things to think about when you went against the lab director and had to leave Lab One.”

Young-Joon stared at her without a word. Park So-Yeon could not look him in the eye. She lowered her head and fiddled with her clasped fingers behind her back.

“I can’t trust you anymore,” Young-Joon said.

“ ... ”

“And you told me to control my temper, right? It’s not that I need to control my temper, but you need to have one.” Young-Joon added, “Be moral and have a temper. You’re a scientist too, aren’t you?”

“ ”
... ”

“The ceremony is going to start soon. I’ll see you inside.”

Young-Joon passed Park So-Yeon and went back into the seminar hall.

* * *

There were five awards given during the year-end seminar.

The first prize was the Award for Exceptional Performance, which was only given to one department. The second prize was the Award for Excellent Performance, which was given to three departments. Finally, the third prize was the Research Award, which was given to five departments. These three awards were given departmentally; they were given a tremendous amount of research funding and a bonus depending on their position.

The next two were given to individuals. One of them was called the A-Gen Scientist Award, and it was given to a total of ten scientists along with a small bonus. It was usually given to young scientists, mostly to encourage them to work hard.

The final award was the Revolutionary Scientist Award. It was given to one scientist who produced the most innovative results. It was the most honorable award for an individual in the A-Gen seminar. It was usually given to executives at a higher position than lead scientists, but not this time since there was someone who produced unbelievable results.

“The recipient of the Revolutionary Scientist Award is...”

Nicholas spoke into the mic. The winners of the other trivial prizes had already been announced, and the only two that remained were this one and the Award for Exceptional Performance.

“Scientist Ryu Young-Joon. Congratulations. Please come up to the stage.”

The crowd applauded and shouted.

“Scientist Ryu Young-Joon. You are awarded this award for leading A-Gen’s development and enhancing A-Gen’s prestige. Presented by Nicholas Kim, the Chief Technology Officer of A-Gen.”

Nicholas handed Young-Joon the plaque.

“Thank you.”

As Young-Joon thanked him and was about to walk off the stage, Nicholas grabbed his shoulder.

“Take one more award before you leave.”

The crowd laughed.

“Next, I will announce the Award for Exceptional Performance. This award goes to the department that pioneered the future technology of A-Gen by producing the most exceptional results. This team developed a method to produce embryonic stem cells easily and proposed a new field for pharmaceuticals and medicine. The Life Creation Department of Lab Six, please come up.”

The crowd applauded, but much less than when Young-Joon came up.

Young-Joon carefully examined each scientist from every department. None of them were actually congratulating them sincerely. Even though Young-Joon caused a big scene by going up against Kim Hyun-Taek, he had only been at the company for a year. Most people didn't really know who he was, and as such, they could congratulate him on receiving the Revolutionary Scientist Award without much concern.

However, it was different for the Life Creation Department. Everyone in this seminar hall thought that the Life Creation Department was beneath them; they all just thought that they got lucky because a smart guy just happened to transfer there. The Life Creation Department was still looked down on by everyone.

‘... It's not that.’

From what Young-Joon saw, everyone in the Life Creation Department was smart and very skilled. They just didn't have any results because the project they were given made no sense to begin with. They also accepted Young-Joon, who came to their department after causing trouble, without any prejudice. But everyone was staring at these talented scientists with disgust in their eyes.

However, Young-Joon was sure that it was going to change from now on as he was going to use this department and its members a lot.

“...Presented by Nicholas Kim, the Chief Technology Officer of A-Gen.”

Cheon Ji-Myung and Bae Sun-Mi took the plaque together as Nicholas handed it to them.

There was another round of applause, along with camera flashes. Those pictures were going to be put up on the company’s official website.

Park Dong-Hyun stroked the plaque with his fingers in awe, and Koh Soon-Yeol wiped under his nose with his pointer finger. Young-Joon looked around for Jung Hae-Rim and found her standing behind him.

“Why are you standing in the back?”

As Young-Joon tried to drag her to the front, she tried desperately to stay where she was.

“N-No... *Sob...* I’m going to get my picture taken... *Weep...*”

She was crying with her face buried in her hands. Now that Young-Joon looked around, he could see that Cheon Ji-Myung’s eyes were wet as well. It was natural for them to cry as they had received the greatest honor in the company after sixteen years of beration.

‘It’s actually nothing.’

Developing this kind of technology was as easy as counting numbers for Rosaline. The 1.5 billion won that would be allocated to their budget as a bonus wasn’t a big deal as well.

Young-Joon was the primary patent holder on the iPSC technology, which was being drawn up in the patent attorney’s office right now. He had written whatever he wanted on the share of the patent as well.

‘Soon, the papers will be sent to Gil Hyung-Joon from the attorney’s office, and he will hit the roof.’

But Young-Joon had something in mind.

* * * magic

The seminar was coming to an end as people were leaving one by one. A small proportion of them were returning to the lab, but most were heading

home right from here. The Life Creation Department had decided to go for a celebratory dinner. It was to welcome Young-Joon to the team as well as to congratulate them for receiving the Award for Exceptional Performance.

“Where should we go?” Bae Sun-Mi asked.

“Of course we should go for meat! Right? Hm... Beef?” Park Dong-Hyun glanced at Jung Hae-Rim like was asking for approval.

“I like meat, but beef is a little expensive. I’m okay with Korean-Chinese food too. If we get like kkanpunggi or something like that...,” Jung Hae-Rim suggested while fixing her eye makeup.[2]

“How can we have something like kkanpunggi on a day like this?” Bae Sun-Mi said in shock.

Then, Jung Hae-Rim left the decision up to Koh Soon-Yeol.

“What would you like, Soon-Yeol-ssi?”

“Hamburgers...?”

“Oh my... None of you know how to use money the right way.” Bae Sun-Mi scoffed. That was when Cheon Ji-Myung interfered.

“Our star should be the one to decide. Doctor Ryu, what do you want?”

“I don’t know. But can we use our bonus to pay for dinner?”

“Of course not,” Cheon Ji-Myung quickly responded like he knew that would lead to trouble.

“Then do we have expenses?” Young-Joon asked.

“We do, but not a lot. But I’m buying today, so choose whatever you want.”

“Then should I get some from over there?” Young-Joon asked.

“Over there?”

Young-Joon was pointing to the entrance of the A-Gen building. Choi Myung-Joon and Seo Yoon-Ju of the Health Food Department were standing there.

“Hm.” Choi Myung-Joon crossed his arms.

“I heard, but I don’t want to cause trouble with another department right away when Doctor Ryu saved our department’s face like this.”

“But they started it first,” Park Dong-Hyun replied to Cheon Ji-Myung.

“They looked down on our entire team,” Jung Hae-Rim added, and Park Dong-Hyun agreed.

“To be honest, Soon-Yeol-ssi, I wanted to throw that shirt out for you. But the way they were talking was just so outrageous.”

“Even if we don’t get money, we should at least get an apology,” Young-Joon added.

“Alright, then I’ll...”

As Cheon Ji-Myung was about to go there, Park Dong-Hyun quickly stopped him.

“It’s going to get weird if manager-level personnel go there. We’ll take care of it ourselves.”

“But they have an executive manager too. Shouldn’t I go fight?” Cheon Ji-Myung asked as he pointed at Choi Myung-Joon.

“All of us have fought against manager-level personnel during our prime time. We also have someone who fought against a lab director who is said to be the next CTO.”

Park Dong-Hyun glanced at Young-Joon.

“Ah... Right. I forgot that all my members were Saiyan.”

Cheon Ji-Myung nodded in understanding.

“Oh, over there.” Koh Soon-Yeol suddenly pointed. “Haha, I saw that woman in front of the washroom before the ceremony.”

“Seo Yoon-Ju-ssi? What did she say?” Park Dong-Hyun asked.

“That is...” Koh Soon-Yeol scratched his head.

It was about three hours ago when Young-Joon was talking on the phone with Cell Bio regarding his experiment that he had commissioned them. Seo Yoon-Ju had called Koh Soon-Yeol at the entrance of the washroom as he was about to go in.

“Koh Soon-Yeol-ssi!”

“Eh? *Ore?*” Koh Soon-Yeol asked as he pointed to himself.

“Are you really going to ask for four hundred thousand won if your department wins the Award for Exceptional Performance?”

“Um...”

“To be honest, it was all Doctor Ryu Young-Joon! You guys didn’t do anything, so why should you get that award and rip me off?”

“*Etto...* The data at the end of the presentation that showed the cell differentiating into a heart muscle cell was from me.”[3]

As Koh Soon-Yeol propped up his glasses, Seo Yoon-Ju frowned.

“Still, this is wrong. How is that rag that you’re wearing Comme Des Garçons!”

“*Yare yare*, the *pointo* is that you promised.”[4]

“No, whatever. Play the CCTV tape or whatever, I don’t care. Sue me if I was the one who bumped into you. Even if it’s my fault and destruction of property, I won’t be ordered to pay that much. No way that the rag that you are wearing costs four hundred thousand won. This is fraud. Just sue me because I can’t just give that to you.”

Park Dong-Hyun and Jung Hae-Rim were shocked.

“She said that?” Park Dong-Hyun asked.

“Without even apologizing?” Jung Hae-Rim added.

Bae Sun-Mi covered her mouth like she was in shock as well.

“She should first be apologizing, but she’s telling you to sue her?” Cheon Ji-Myung frowned.

“I don’t understand. Still, we got the Award for Exceptional Performance...,”
Bae Sun-Mi murmured.

“They think we’re the same old Life Creation Department that’s beneath them even if we get the award,” Cheon Ji-Myung replied like this was a headache.

Crack. Crack.

Park Dong-Hyun cracked his neck and warmed up his body.

“Ah, man... They’re making my temper from my prime time come up again...”

As Park Dong-Hyun walked toward them like he was about to destroy them, Young-Joon stood in front of him.

“I will take care of it.”

“What are you going to do?” Jung Hae-Rim asked.

“We can’t be fighting them on a departmental scale right now. Probiotics is a field I want to study next year, so we have to use the Health Food Department a lot.”

“Hm...”

“But we can’t just let this slide. I will get them here and make them apologize, so just wait.”

Young-Joon calmed the four people down and walked over to Choi Myung-Joon and Seo Yoon-Ju.

‘It’s actually better when they apologize to me on their own like Park So-Yeon.’

[Rosaline Lv.2]

Young-Joon pulled up the status window. He pressed on the message window and opened the data on probiotics. It had the analysis of Roche’s probiotic product, Active Lactobacillin.

1. iPSC is short for induced pluripotent stem cells. ?

2. Kkanpunggi is a Korean-Chinese dish that consists of deep fried chicken pieces in a spicy and sweet garlic oil sauce. ?

3. *Etto* is a filler word in Japanese, and it essentially means “uhh” or “umm”. ?

4. *Yare yare* means “well well” in Japanese, and *pointo* is the Japanese pronunciation for “point”. ?

Chapter 20: The Ambitious One (1)

“Hello.”

Young-Joon greeted Choi Myung-Joon and Seo Yoon-Ju. Both of them were startled like they saw a ghost or something. Now, they could see Cheon Ji-Myung, Bae Sun-Mi, Park Dong-Hyun, and Jung Hae-Rim glare at them with fierce eyes from afar.

Seo Yoon-Ju gulped. She was extremely nervous.

Young-Joon stared at her for a bit and then said, “The happening at the cafeteria. You were in the wrong, right, Scientist Seo?”

“... Yes, that’s right... I’m sorry,” Seo Yoon-Ju answered in a tiny voice.

“Well, I’ve only been in the Life Creation team for a week, and the ones that you had trouble with were my seniors, so you don’t have to say sorry to me. You just need to go talk to the seniors yourself.”

“ ... ”

“The reason why I came to see you wasn’t to argue about that but just to let you know about something.”

“Let us know?” Puzzled, Choi Myung-Joon asked with his head tilted.

“Yes, a venture company in Korea is working on probiotics, and I think they are going to create a good product soon.”

Young-Joon was talking about Celligener. Of course, the part about them creating a good product was a lie.

“Which company?”

"I can't tell you that. When it comes out, it will be better than Roche's Active Lactobacillin."

"What?" Choi Myung-Joon was filled with shock.

"Manager Choi, the Health Food Department is the team working on probiotics at A-Gen, right?"

"...Yes."

"I heard that you got an earful because you let Roche steal your share in the market."

"Yes... That's right."

"Even if Roche surpassed A-Gen, I heard A-Gen is ahead in markets in Korea and Asia. However, if a venture company in Korea develops a good product, their competition is going to be A-Gen rather than Roche, isn't it? Because they'll start with the market in Korea."

"..."

"If you do nothing, you might bleed a little from the criticism during the next seminar. Do you have a plan to solve this?"

"We're working on it," Choi Myung-Joon said.

"If you sit back and relax like that, A-Gen will keep losing its share in the probiotics market. It's a reliable item and the future industry, so we can't afford to lose it like that. I'm thinking of experimenting with probiotics since our department received the Award for Exceptional Performance."

"That's our department's responsibility!" Seo Yoon-Ju shouted in surprise.

"I know. But there's a tradition of letting the department that got the award do whatever research they wanted for a year, and they have the budget to do that, too. And we're all A-Gen employees, aren't we? It's all of our loss if A-Gen loses the probiotics market. We should stop it if we can, no matter the department. I have a better item than the venture company, too."

"What... is it?" Choi Myung-Joon asked with a slightly quivering voice.

"It's a secret."

“S-Stop bluffing. How can someone who’s only worked with animal cells at the Life Creation Department know about probiotics? Those are bacteria and microbes!” Seo Yoon-Ju shouted.

“Lactobacillus acidophilus, Lactobacillus casei, Lactobacillus bulgaricus, Lactobacillus rhamnosus, Bifidobacterium bifidum, Bifidobacterium breve, Bifidobacterium lactis, Lactococcus lactis, Enterococcus faecalis.”

As if he was chanting a magic spell, Young-Joon began listing the components of Roche’s probiotic product. Choi Myung-Joon and Seo Yoon-Ju couldn’t see it, but a list of ingredients in Roche’s product that he had seen before was floating in front of his eyes.

“Those are the components in Roche’s product.” Young-Joon added, “I can also tell you the biological mechanism of these bacteria. For example, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* usually use lactose, and they can suppress the growth of harmful bacteria by creating around twenty different types of chemicals and using those as natural antibiotics. When given to the intestines, it can help with the activation of the immune system and improve bowel movements.”

“ ... ”

“Do you need me to explain the others?”

“No...”

Seo Yoon-Ju gulped.

“You really don’t think I have a good item? Because it’s weird that someone who worked with animal cells knows a lot about probiotics? But it’s also just as weird for someone who developed anticancer drugs to work on stem cells,” Young-Joon said.

“ ... ”

“I want to borrow the Health Food Department’s equipment once I start working on probiotics. We can work together, right? Or we can make a task force team for probiotics. Of course, we would share some of the rewards with you.”

“Of course,” Choi Myung-Joon replied with a bright face.

“That’s a relief. I was going to work with that venture company if you said no.”

Choi Myung-Joon and Seo Yoon-Ju both flinched. Young-Joon went on.

“To be honest, the person who told me that the venture company was working on probiotics is actually my friend. Haha, they told me they wanted to do it together. It would look good if A-Gen and a venture company had a technology partnership, right? So I was thinking we should make a partnership with them and work together.”

Choi Myung-Joon’s hand trembled slightly.

“W-Would you need to work with another company when you have a department that works on probiotics in the same lab...” Seo Yoon-Ju mumbled.

“Right? There’s no reason to do that. Haha. I feel a little sorry for my friend, but I should give my item to the Health Food Department, and give my friend’s company something else, right?” Young-Joon asked.

“Of course...”

“Oh, Scientist Seo. I heard that you met Soon-Yeol-sunbae in front of the washroom during the break before the ceremony started.”

“Huh? Um... Yes, we met.” Seo Yoon-Ju went pale as if all the blood left her body.

“I heard you guys talked for a little bit? I assume you apologized?”

“...”

Young-Joon stared at her. Seo Yoon-Ju could not say anything.

“Or did you fight more?” Young-Joon asked like he was curious.

“Um... That is...”

“We’re sorry.” Choi Myung-Joon quickly interfered. “We couldn’t deliver a proper apology because we were so busy. We will apologize right now and provide compensation.”

Choi Myung-Joon put his role as the department head, a middleman, above being a scientist. He believed that his eye for people had become pretty sharp from working at a company for so long. From what he saw, Young-Joon was not someone they should keep as an enemy.

Choi Myung-Joon considered what kind of results Young-Joon, a scientist who was only about thirty, had shown. His bravery in setting up projects that seemed almost impossible in the Life Creation Department, which was basically barren, in the face of pressure to get results. His determination, which drove the project forward when his department members would have disagreed on it, and his ingenuity, which allowed him to get results. The spirit and ferocity to go against Kim Hyun-Taek without compromising his morals.

'This guy is dangerous.'

They were relatively autonomous in terms of research direction now that they got the award, and they also had received funding. What this meant was that there was no telling what this genius would do next.

Young-Joon was probably going to climb up the ladder quickly. He would probably become an executive soon since he was talented and also caught Nicholas' eye. He might even become the CTO when he became Choi Myung-Joon's age. If that happened, it would go in whatever direction Young-Joon wanted, as A-Gen was a research-focused company,

There was no reason for Choi Myung-Joon to be afraid as Young-Joon was still a Scientist, but it was clear that he was someone they should not keep as an enemy.

"Let's go, Yoon-Ju."

Choi Myung-Joon quickly grabbed Seo Yoon-Ju's wrist.

"Let's go."

Young-Joon grinned and led the way as if he was waiting for this.

'He came here, already knowing that this would happen.'

Choi Myung-Joon gulped. He felt like Young-Joon, who was walking in front of them, looked like the devil.

However, to Koh Soon-Yeol and the other members of the Life Creation Department, Young-Joon looked like a wizard. They couldn't think of any other way to explain that situation other than Young-Joon using magic, such as mind control.

"He's really bringing them here?" Park Dong-Hyun exclaimed in surprise.

"Doctor Koh Soon-Yeol." Choi Myung-Joon bowed to Koh Soon-Yeol. "We misspoke last time. We sincerely apologize."

"I'm sorry. I was the one who bumped into you. I will provide compensation," Seo Yoon-Ju also apologized in a tiny voice.

"We're also really sorry to Doctor Jung Hae-Rim and Doctor Park Dong-Hyun."

The two bowed toward them as well.

Park Dong-Hyun crossed his arms and stared at them.

"Alright. I hope something this exhausting doesn't happen again."

"I will send you the money for dry cleaning. I'm really sorry. I will be careful next time..."

Seo Yoon-Ju noted down Koh Soon-Yeol's bank account number with tears welling up in her eyes.

* * *

"Should we choose where to get dinner?" Bae Sun-Mi asked after Choi Myung-Joon and Seo Yoon-Ju left.

The members of the Life Creation Department were psychos who could not get along with people in other departments. However, all they did was not suck up and speak up in an authoritative kkondae environment.[1]

They were also people with common decency.

"Let's get beef. We can finish dinner at nine, and people who want to go for round two can go if they want. Drinking is optional as well," Cheon Ji-Myung announced.

“Is there anywhere near here to get beef?” Park Dong-Hyun asked and pulled out his phone to look up places nearby.

“I know a place. There’s a good restaurant around here that has good beef,” Bae Sun-Mi said.

“Oh! Of course you do, sunbae. You said you have a foodie blog for restaurants... Where is it?” Jung Hae-Rim brightly smiled.

“Do you know that they have black cows in Jeju? They call it Jeju Black Cow, and this place specializes in it. They cook it for you, and the taste...”

Bae Sun-Mi showed a thumbs-up as she imagined it.

“Let’s go already. I’m getting dizzy,” Park Dong-Hyun said.

“Follow me, everyone.” Bae Sun-Mi led the way in excitement. The place she took the team to was a barbeque place behind the restaurant alley behind the A-Gen building.

[You a Fool If You Ain’t Been Here][2]

“ ... ”

‘What a name, huh?’

As confident as Bae Sun-Mi was, the meat was absolutely delicious. The server grilled the thick cut of beef with mushrooms and onions.

Koh Soon-Yeol, who grabbed a piece, was shocked when he put it in his mouth.

“Haa? *Oishii?* It’s better than wagyu.”[3]

“I’m going to cry because it’s so good. I want to subscribe to your blog...” Jung Hae-Rim said with teary eyes.

“It’s really good. I’m going to come here with my wife next time,” Park Dong-Hyun added.

“Hae-Rim and Dong-Hyun, you’re going to drink, right? Soon-Yeol doesn't drink.” Cheon Ji-Myung asked.

“Of course!” Jung Hae-Rim shouted with a bright smile.

“Lead Sun-Mi isn’t drinking too because she needs to watch her kid—” Cheon Ji-Myung commented but was interrupted swiftly.

“No, I’m going to have some today. My husband is at home watching the kid because it was his day off.”

“Aha. Alright. Do you like alcohol, Doctor Ryu?” Cheon Ji-Myung asked.

To be honest, Young-Joon could barely tolerate alcohol. He had it every day after being kicked out of the Anticancer Drug Research Department, but before that, he tried really hard not to lose consciousness during every company dinner.

“I’ll have a little bit.”

“We don’t force you to drink or anything. You don’t have to have any if you don’t want to,” Cheon Ji-Myung assured Young-Joon.

“Ahaha, yes, thank you. Just a little bit, please.”

“Alright. Soon-Yeol, you want Coke?”

“I would like it if you got me Sprite. Sprite is good to have because it’s refreshing, just like our win.”

“Excuse me, could we get two bottles of Chamisul[4] and a bottle of Sprite?” Cheon Ji-Myung ordered and turned his attention toward Young-Joon again. “How much can you drink, Doctor Ryu?”

“About half a bottle of soju.”

“No, you can’t talk about your limit like that,” Cheon Ji-Myung replied.

“Dong-Hyun, how should a scientist say their alcohol limit?” He asked.

“Of course, in liters per hour,” Park Dong-Hyun replied.

“Haha, then I’m not sure. What about you, Dong-Hyun-sunbae?” Young-Joon asked.

“My limit is one bottle per hour, but I can only have half a bottle because of my wife.”

“Does she scold you if you have more than half a bottle?” Young-Joon asked as Park Dong-Hyun suddenly brought up his wife.

“No, well, nothing like that, but...”

“Haha, Doctor Ryu. Dong-Hyun’s wife has a good grip on him. Don’t have a marriage like that,” Cheon Ji-Myung said, chuckling.

“No, I just really love my wife. She doesn’t control me or anything.” Park Dong-Hyun shook his hand like it was nonsense.

“... Is what he says, but he always calls her and reports the situation every hour when we have a team dinner. You’ll probably see him do it today, too,” Jung Hae-Rim said with a laugh.

Young-Joon also chuckled and remarked, “Well, no matter the reason, it’s good that you hold yourself back.”

Cheon Ji-Myung poured everyone a glass once the server brought it to their table.

The winter night deepened, and the Life Creation Department kept drinking and eating. Koh Soon-Yeol watched an hour of anime during dinner, and Park Dong-Hyun made an excuse that he needed to go to the washroom and went and called his wife. No one forced them to stay, and yet, no one left. Everyone wanted to enjoy today’s feelings a bit more.

And after a few bottles of wine at a bar, they went for round three...

“Doctor Ryu, I’m saying this not as your department head, but as a scientist who has done research for a lot longer than you have. I’m being sincere, and it’s because I’m thinking for your sake,”

Cheon Ji-Myung said with a slur.

“I want you to leave A-Gen.”

1. Kkondae refers to people who are usually authoritative and force their traditional and negative thoughts and beliefs onto someone else. These people are usually from the older generation. ?

2. This restaurant name is a wordplay. ??, or Black Cow, is often used as ??, which means ripped-off, because it sounds similar. The original name of the restaurant means that you're getting ripped off if you haven't been here. ?

3. *Oishii* is Japanese for "delicious". ?

4. A soju brand ?