

THE SUBJECT

*Translated by Grace Jung*

**E**ven after A-ram's abrupt disappearance was confirmed as an abduction, my wife held herself together for a while. The secret behind her composure was the genuine hope that the child might make a safe return to us, and a mother's unyielding willpower and prayer that the boy would be found before any final conclusions were drawn.

Early May of last year.

On one particular day, despite being long past his regular time to come home, A-ram did not return. The boy, who'd advanced onto the fourth grade about a month before, was to take the same route he took to school and to his abacus class near the town's shopping district. The class was not something we'd encouraged him to take on. It was something he pursued for his own satisfaction.

Could it have been the lame leg? Born to us when his mother was nearly forty, since a very young age he was

mild tempered and stood out from other children. But beyond just his docility, he was soft spoken and quiet to the point of appearing devious. Even when he was younger, he hadn't once gone outside to play—nor did he make any effort to socialize with the neighborhood children. He grew up in pure solitude within the confines of the house. He never coveted any particular amusements for himself. Unable to latch onto any sort of hobby, he simply locked himself in his room, where he spent his days in isolation. Even his gestures and speaking manner were composed and careful.

Things remained the same even after he was admitted to elementary school. He had a disabilities record since birth, so my wife and I had no need to make special requests of the school; our son's homeroom teacher gave him the extra attention that other disabled students received, but he showed no signs of change. There was no indication that he had befriended a peer or developed an interest in any particular subject. Despite his lack of interest in any hobbies, his grades were uniformly high—high enough to put him at an advanced grade level, which was evidence of him being the sort of child who made sure that his tasks were properly tended to.

But this was in the spring of last year after he had advanced into the fourth grade. Up until recently, our son, who hadn't shown the slightest interest in anything, not even during special activities hour, developed a sudden interest in the abacus and decided on his own to take classes. His aptitude for the study was so natural that he actually appeared to show

enthusiasm for it. Upon his return from school, he constantly had the abacus at his side. Eventually, he asked to be enrolled for abacus lessons at an institute near the shopping district. A couple of months later, he was returning from school to rush through his lunch before immediately heading back down the same route to get to his abacus class.

For us, this was a relief. Whether or not our child excelled at the abacus wasn't our concern. This wasn't a case of negotiating the success of his skills, either. To know that the boy could at the very least apply himself to something he'd finally developed an interest in could only make us proud and relieved.

But on this day, unlike any other, it was very late and he still hadn't returned home from school. Even past the start time of his abacus lesson, there was still no sign of him. My wife, who runs the storefront pharmacy with me, went into the annex, where we live, and returned several times, but there were no calls at the house. There were no messages alerting us that he'd be late, either. He certainly wasn't the sort of child who would wander off somewhere, distracted by some other business while putting off his abacus class to another time.

"Maybe something came up at school today?"

"Or, maybe he was short on time and went straight to his lesson without stopping by home first?"

Of course no such thing had ever happened in the past. Usually, from the time of his return until he was due at his lesson, there was about an hour to kill, and no matter how late his dismissal from school might

have been, there was never an instance when A-ram was more than an hour late. Although the abacus lesson was on his way back from school, there was no reason for him to make a stop there first. But seeing as he still hadn't arrived past the start of his lesson, we had no option but to make our own assumptions—perhaps there was a special event at school, and seeing that he was short on time, he decided to make his way straight to his lesson before coming home first. Even in our apprehensive state, we quelled any disquieting thoughts and waited for his lesson hour to end. After giving it further thought, we realized how absurd it was to worry ourselves by making so many assumptions without knowing all the facts.

But even after his abacus lesson had ended, there was no sign of A-ram. In fact, the inquiry on his whereabouts came from the abacus school: "I'm the principal of the abacus school who is responsible for A-ram's lessons. I'm calling because A-ram has never missed a lesson, but I didn't see him today."

Something definitely must have happened at school. We couldn't think of anything else to make sense of the situation. We immediately contacted the school, but they denied having seen anything out of the ordinary. They claimed that classes ended on time, just like any other day, and that all the children had gone home.

"We didn't notice any children missing during the final class hour, so A-ram must have gone directly home after that"—these were the words of his homeroom teacher, who happened to be at school until that hour. With that, the teacher agreed to contact the other

students at home, asking us to try and wait a little longer.

"As expected, it appears that A-ram still hasn't befriended any of his classmates. We're sure that he exited through the school gate along with the other children but after that, nobody has seen him." Along with such claims, the teacher said that due to A-ram's very introverted personality, perhaps he'd been practicing a secret activity all by himself up till now—if not, perhaps he is with a friend that nobody is aware of. She further suggested that we should wait just a little bit longer—that it couldn't be possible for anything bad to have happened to him, and that by tomorrow, if there still wasn't any news, she would try to find some information from the class children once more. I hung up at the end of such absurd remarks.

The trouble definitely must have occurred at some point during his walk home from school. It was the sort of trouble that wouldn't resolve itself just by us sitting there and waiting for our pharmacy to close, as the teacher had suggested. Just as we'd expected, our son did not return after sundown. We closed the pharmacy earlier than usual and filed a missing child report at the police station.

But just because they are called "officers of the law," it doesn't necessarily mean that they have any special strategy or plan of action.

"If you say that he's old enough to be in the fourth grade then there's no way he could've been abducted that easily . . . Perhaps a bunch of town delinquents are holding him captive? But, uh, you know, there's no

need for alarm. If it's the work of local bullies, they'll probably just rob him of some valuables and send him on his way." The officer said that they'd patrol around the school and throughout town on the lookout for the delinquents, and he suggested that we wait the entire night and see if anything happened.

In any case, there was no other option. We had no choice but to wait it out. We waited the entire night without sleeping a wink. At the earliest class hour, we rushed over to the school only to discover that, indeed, our son was not there. Even among his classmates, there wasn't a single child who knew anything about A-ram's whereabouts. Just like that, like a riddle without an answer, A-ram had vanished on his way home from school. Of course, it goes without saying that there was an outburst of commotion at home and at A-ram's school.

However, this was not the sort of thing that panicking would resolve. Several days after recovering from the turmoil of shock, anxiety and despair—after the hellish waiting had passed—we assumed a new mindset and gathered any and all resources necessary for the search for our child and retraced his tracks in a focused and careful manner. We closed the pharmacy and thoroughly searched every possible place where our child's feet might have touched. We contacted everyone we knew, starting with A-ram's classmates and close, and distant, relatives, missing no one, and made successive announcements in every vicinity of the school, the town, and the business district. And so, we anxiously awaited our child's return. At school,

the children began a "Search for A-ram" campaign, which, in effect, inspired the police to launch a full-scale search—the same police who had initially taken on the assignment with such a lack of enthusiasm. Furthermore, the case had reached a point where even the principal of the abacus school took the lead as the front man of our son's search party.

Despite the efforts of all these people, there was still no news of A-ram. A week went by. Two weeks went by without a single lead. If he had in fact run off on his own, then it was about time that he would have grown tired of the act and returned, but there was still no sign of him. It would be difficult to conclude that he was the sort of child who would leave home on his own. The boy was extremely shy; furthermore, he had no reason to run away from home, nor did he have the nerve to pull off such a stunt. The likelihood of this being a case of abduction gradually increased. Nobody we knew would ever hold such a grudge against us. In any case, if money was the motive for the kidnapping, ill will shouldn't have existed in the first place. The pharmacy was doing well, and the fact that this was known around town could have potentially been a gateway to a lead. Having had this in the back of our minds since the beginning, we quietly awaited a call relating to this effect. We were cautious so as not to provoke the hypothetical criminal's temper should he be holding A-ram for ransom (if only that ill-omen of ours had been mere theory!). On a couple of occasions we even went so far as to put an ad in the newspaper. But news of the case might have been too widespread

at that point, which is perhaps why he was waiting for things to quiet down a bit. Either that or he'd foregone all his plans and withdrawn completely. There was no word or demand from the unseen offender. This further aggravated our unease. It'd be one thing if the culprit was waiting for the right time to reach us, but if he had abandoned his mission entirely, our thoughts on how he would put an end to this matter only deepened our concern.

We had no choice but to wait. No matter what we had to bear, in spite of the inauspiciousness of it all, we had to find our son at all costs. We could not lose hope. The hope and earnest prayer that we would indeed find our child no matter what it took were the greatest support and strength for my wife (what is the point of me saying this now?). They kept her from fainting in exhaustion and allowed her to fight through the disaster even in her repressed state. Through hope and prayer, my wife was able to maintain herself while suffering through such a horrid event. Even after the world had gradually lost interest in A-ram's disappearance, my wife wasn't in the least bit discouraged, and exhibited an even greater sense of tenacity and willpower than before.

Nothing changed. A whole month went by and there was still no news of A-ram. And just as all events invariably become mundane, people gradually distanced themselves from A-ram's case. It seemed as though the police investigators were losing interest, as were the school children, who seemed to have put aside their classmate's issue as a completed project, one in

which they'd done all that they could. All efforts were dying down.

Meanwhile, the newspapers and radio stations which had produced one or two reports on our cause refused to continue their support. We sensed that the people were now coming to terms with A-ram's disappearance as unsolvable, but my wife remained steadfast in her efforts no matter which way the wind blew. In fact, as everyone else's doubts increased, my wife's determination grew just as much, as if she would sacrifice herself in order to find our child. All her energy was devoted to the search. Every day, after locking up the pharmacy, she ran in every which direction, day or night. She didn't hesitate to resort to any and all measures. She ran from place to place, visiting newspaper offices, requesting their help, and tracking down the radio stations' announcements and programs office with messages directed at the hypothetical criminal that we were prepared to meet whatever demands just as long as the child was returned to us safely. My wife even went so far as to request for our son's caretaking during his stay with the abductor. At the school gate, she handed out photos of A-ram along with a banner that displayed a pronouncement on human rights. At the bus terminal and train stations, she stood at bustling intersections and picketed with a sign that announced her search for her child, drawing glances from all passersby. She did not draw the line there. As the search gradually seemed to become more and more a lost cause, my wife resorted to a method that all of our women have

turned to in the past and paid a visit to the temple to light a candle and place an offering in return for a protective light on A-ram's path. Not only that, she visited every church she could find (my wife was never a churchgoer) and made generous offerings to secure the safe return of our son.

As my wife tried everything she could think of, devoting all her efforts to the search for our son, even I, the child's father, couldn't help but feel moved and surprised. To be completely honest, at this point, I had prepared myself for the worst possible outcome. As the days slowly passed, I became deeply pessimistic—my body and heart's devotion was exhausted. I would not have been able to handle it without keeping my expectations at an absolute low. However, I could not reveal such feelings to my wife, not even a suggestion, for her tenacity and hopes were too high. Whether the child was found or not, I couldn't give the slightest hint of such thoughts to my wife. Even if my wife's superhuman efforts were to reach a limit at some point and result in a fruitless search, for her own sake, the actions that she took were necessary, and we were fortunate enough to at least have the search to keep us occupied. What kept my wife from collapsing, what kept her standing upright throughout the ordeal, were hope and a sense of purpose. In order to boost our courage, morale, and willingness to live on, my wife and I had to believe that our child remained alive and well.

Despite my wife's hard work, her tenacious efforts ended in failure. Just as I had secretly sensed all along,

the absolute worst possible result would ultimately be confirmed. On July twenty-second, right around dusk, exactly two months and twenty days since A-ram's disappearance, his corpse was tragically found hidden in the basement floor of a two-story building near the abacus school and not too far from our home.

The child's body had decomposed beyond recognition. But from the unsightly condition of his bound hands and feet, along with the apparent pains taken to stuff a handkerchief into his mouth, there was no room for doubt that this was indeed a case of abduction and murder. All that was left to do was to track down the murderer, who was no longer hypothetical in our minds. Now that the pieces of the crime scene were out in the open, it was only a matter of time before the criminal was ferreted out. Above all else, the site where the child's corpse was found offered the most significant clues in mapping out the crime.

The district of the building where our child's body was discovered had recently been purchased by the city for redevelopment. Therefore, since early spring, people there had begun vacating their homes. The alleged crime scene, otherwise known as "the two-story building," was abandoned in April (further investigation confirmed that this was right before A-ram's disappearance). It was obvious that the criminal had kidnapped A-ram and hidden him in that location while biding his time. But seeing as the way things unfolded was not as he had planned, he killed our child then hid the body. Could it have been because the criminal gave up his initial plan too soon?

Or, perhaps because there were so many abandoned houses in our neighborhood, we neglected even to think of such a possibility. What is bizarre is that despite the countless rounds made in that area by my wife, myself and the police, we never found anything that led us to that site.

In any case, after nearly three months of our son lying on the cold concrete floor of that dark basement, the building's demolition began, and only then was the poor boy's body exposed. This was because the evacuation of the locals was complete at the end of June, which was when the demolition began. And, contrary to what the criminal had calculated (perhaps believing that the basement would most likely be refilled with earth), one unthinking fork crane operator unearthed the entire concrete floor.

Naturally, the pursuit of the criminal began there at the building—ground zero of the investigation. The neighbors from the redevelopment area and the shopping district were told to appear at the station for questioning. Of that group, the most suspicion fell on the principal (Kim Do-seop) of the abacus school that our son had been attending. If the crime was intended to secure a ransom, the criminal must have been someone who was at least aware of our approximate income, and someone who our fourth grader son would have known and trusted enough to follow. The abacus school principal fit the criteria. Furthermore, because a new residential building was being erected in the same district as the school, it's likely that the principal had keen insight into circumstances of the entire area. We

could not simply call his inquiry on A-ram's absence on the day of his abduction a mere coincidence. There was something about his enthusiasm during the search for our child that seemed unconvincing.

As a suspect, he could not escape being the most likely killer. From the way the police interrogation was conducted, it appeared that their suspicions were largely focused on him as well. The problem was, it seemed as though the entire thing hinged on him. If he simply confessed the truth, all would be revealed in an instant. Since the day they discovered our child's body, and after the case had been reopened, the police were already convinced of this (my wife, myself, and all our close friends and relatives did not disagree). We waited for him to give it all up and confess. This was not some hasty conclusion we'd come to. The crime was solved as we'd predicted it would be. Kim Do-seop, the man who ran the abacus school—unable to withstand the careful and persistent interrogation of the police—broke down and confessed to his crime.

But it would be best to abandon the particulars at this point in the story because, since the outset, the purpose has not been to dwell on the details of the ruthless event (what witless, heartless father would want to replay the tragic death of his own son in his mind? Such pain would be no different from having the child taken from him all over again), but rather I want to focus on the life of the second victim. The story is now turning into the tale of that victim—my wife—because even after the criminal had been captured and the truth was revealed, as far as my wife

was concerned, it couldn't possibly end there. It is also because the sacrifice that my wife made deserves my witness testimony, even if it means that I must prepare myself for all the pain and horror that this world has to offer.

In that case, after the criminal had been identified, what happened to my wife? No—what I mean is, after the child's corpse was discovered in such a mangled state, what could my wife have done for herself and for the child? It goes without saying that when my wife grasped the tragedy that befell our son, it was as if the world had ended for her. The moment she did, it was like falling into a bottomless hell of suffering and despair that could suffocate a person. For the next several days, my wife fell into a state of near unconsciousness. She fainted intermittently, and when awake, she was like a woman gone mad, absentmindedly crying and laughing to herself, falling helplessly apart piece by piece.

Thankfully, however, my wife's despair and self-torment only lasted a few days. She picked herself out of the pit of remorse and stood back up on her two feet. And like she had done when the child first went missing, she displayed an intimidating willpower that was no longer motivated by hope and prayer but by that of thirst for revenge.

Now, at long last, if I were to be honest, my wife was able to withstand the period following the news of A-ram's death because of the help of our neighbor and church deacon, Mrs. Kim, who ran a shop selling handmade bedclothes just two doors down from our

pharmacy. Despite the differences between the two women at the start of their relationship, Mrs. Kim's advice had a strange effect of pulling my wife back up from her anguished collapse.

"Come before our Lord Jesus. And lean on him for his love. The Lord helps us carry every burden. He suffers the pain that all wounded souls suffer, and mends them with his love. Right now, you're experiencing a tremendous blow to the soul that you can't possibly endure alone. It's the kind that a mother could never brave out on her own . . ."

This was the kind of encouragement and advice Mrs. Kim provided. But, to my surprise, such remarks proved to be extraordinarily effective. Of course, this wasn't the first time Mrs. Kim had attempted to win over my wife. Mrs. Kim was just as committed to the church as she was to her shop, and she made frequent visits to the pharmacy in attempts to recruit my wife and win her faith even before the A-ram tragedy.

"You, too, should acquire faith. There's nothing more important in a person's life. A life without faith is a stale lie. Once you believe, both you and your life will become anew."

But, for whatever reason, my wife didn't so much as consider hearing her out. Mrs. Kim, who is about five years my wife's senior, never took offense at this reaction, and kept coming back.

"You just wait and see. I will bring you to our Lord one way or another. Do you think you are not susceptible to pain and difficulty? Even to a child's mother, there will come a time when she will need the

Lord's hand to guide her. When the time comes, I'll definitely—now you just wait and see . . ." Mrs. Kim would leave after an ominous pause, as if promising to return at the most opportune moment, yet she still dropped by frequently. My wife usually took such ill-omened remarks indifferently, without being particularly fazed by them. But just as this woman had prophesized, a terrible event had wound up befalling us after all. As if to say, "I told you so," as if she'd been waiting for this kidnapping all along, Mrs. Kim came running back to my wife almost immediately. And at the end of every other sentence, she tried to win over my wife's faith.

"Come before Jesus. He worries and suffers along with those who are in pain, and he came to this earth out of love just to endure the burden that you carry." With such tempting propositions made by Mrs. Kim, my wife turned her ear to her, as if imploring her for some relief.

"God is all knowing, all powerful, and the one who provides for all living things in the universe. Jesus is his one and only son."

"Then does he know what has happened to my boy?"

"Not only does he know, but through his love he is watching over him right now. So don't worry yourself too much, first, go before him and make the decision to serve him."

"Will he bring my boy back to me safely?"

"Only if that is his purpose . . . But before you wish for something like that, you must commit your faith

to him first. He is always waiting for you to believe in him."

In my wife's anxious and pitiful state, what Mrs. Kim offered sounded not only like encouragement but also a promise. I suppose that was the straw that finally broke the camel's back. If it were for the sake of finding our child, my wife was prepared to throw herself down into the fiery pits of hell. Not just God, but even if it were a straw man, my wife would have clung to him if it meant any guidance. In fact, my wife had already gone so far as to light a candle and make an offering at the Buddhist temple. My wife followed Mrs. Kim as if she'd finally made the decision to move ahead. For three to four weeks, she went and prayed, and even made offerings to the church. Just like the time she'd lit incense at the temple, she blindly handed the offering to the church in an amount even greater than her previous one. But this was not a sign of her determination in pursuing a life of faith. Rather, it was a sign of her earnest hope. Visiting the temple was only the first of a series of inconsistent behaviors.

Perhaps God had been aware of my wife's true intentions, so he did not answer her prayers. Despite my wife's unstinted offerings, ultimately, our child was not returned to us. Through this awful tragedy, she realized our child was gone. My wife no longer relied on the Lord's strength and love. All that remained inside her was contempt. And now, whether it was in love or contempt, there was no time to consider "the Lord" any further. For awhile there, after experiencing the gruesome sight of our child's body, my wife wandered

a darkness of her own hell, looking as though she'd lost everything.

Mrs. Kim, as if she'd been expecting this outcome all along, did not show her face. Then, a little more than a week after the boy's body was found, she paid our home another visit to console my wife. But on a day like this, when my wife was lying down with her head wrapped in cloth, there was no way that Mrs. Kim's consolation could possibly penetrate my wife's ears. She didn't so much as acknowledge Mrs. Kim's arrival. No matter who came and said what, she simply stared vacantly at the ceiling. Mrs. Kim, ignoring the state my wife was in, began letting loose with a heartfelt speech. of comfort.

"I am more than aware of the pain in your heart. But that's all the more reason to depend on and share your troubles with someone. Under the circumstances, it might be difficult, but that's all the more reason to try and open your heart, and by doing so, genuinely try to greet the Lord. You'll find greater peace of mind." Could it have been that Mrs. Kim's consolation was too sincere and desperate? Could that have been what opened the doors to my wife's soul, which had been firmly shut? My wife, who'd been absentmindedly staring at the ceiling regardless of what anyone said, finally began to weep.

As though she'd regained consciousness, she slowly shook her head back and forth. "Everything's in vain. And God's love is a lie. If God is really the Almighty then why did he do that to our A-ram? What wrong did our young son commit? If God's love is really great,

then he should never have allowed such a thing." It was a bitter petition full of contempt and resignation. But, if nothing else, it was a sign of her finally coming to a restored state of mind. Mrs. Kim, as if she'd found some encouragement in this, continued to coax her. "My dear, you really shouldn't hold our Lord in contempt. If you continue to harbor that contempt, you'll only be hurting yourself. And this might be a lot to ask of you right now, but the more you feel that way, the more you should soften your heart and be receptive to the Lord's love. His profound will and love cannot be understood by human wisdom alone. What's happened to A-ram may seem like a tragedy in our eyes, but it's also possible that the Lord's purpose is residing in this event. It's possible that what happened to A-ram is the Lord's way of showing us a greater kind of love that we do not yet know of. And there isn't anything else but that. What I'm saying is that it's possible that the Lord has called your son to him before anyone else just to seek your love . . ."

At that point, it's possible that Mrs. Kim's consolation went a bit too far for my wife. It's also possible that my wife couldn't rid herself of that grudge, not for anything. She spoke as though she had God right before her very eyes, shouting at Mrs. Kim.

"No. God doesn't know anything! If God is the Almighty, then he wouldn't be hiding the murderous devil who did this to my son. A-ram is dead, but the murderer hasn't been caught. If God is truly all knowing then why won't he point out the murderer? Is God not disclosing the criminal's whereabouts intentionally? If

that's the case, then how is he any different from the bastard who did this? Is that why God returned our son in that state, because God knows all? By scheming with that bastard?"

My wife's scorn had finally reached a breaking point. Her anger and contempt couldn't possibly justify scolding her, especially because our child's corpse had been found but the criminal was still at large. More than anything else, my wife's sorrow and sadness demanded that she come face-to-face with the one responsible. Her deep-seated rage, scorn, and vindictiveness couldn't possibly subside with just that one explosion. "God doesn't know. A God who cannot even point out who the murderer is? Love and providence—they're all bullshit. I'll catch the bastard before God does. I'll run into the fires of hell if I have to so that I can grab that bastard by the neck and drag him back up here." That intense scorn for God fueled the fire for revenge and pulled my wife back up from her pit of grief and despair. From that day forward, displaying an extreme devotion to chasing down the criminal, she behaved like a completely different person.

Although it wasn't necessarily Mrs. Kim's intention, thanks to her, my wife was able to collect herself and move forward. It's quite possible that the rage, contempt, and quest for revenge proved to be more effective sources for her survival than God's love and providence.

My wife carried on in that frightening manner, fueling her fire for vengeance and putting all her efforts

into catching the criminal. Ultimately the opportunity for her to satisfy her hunger never appeared, but not because the criminal hadn't been captured. The criminal already had a well-prepared defense of his own, so even after A-ram's corpse was discovered, his true colors weren't readily apparent. That's because the principal of the abacus school had a nearly watertight alibi for the day of A-ram's abduction, and the day after the incident he stepped up and led the search party—the sly bastard. See, what had happened was that back in late June, three weeks before A-ram's body was discovered, the building where this man conducted his abacus instruction became a part of the city's redevelopment plans, and he'd confidently planned to leave town unnoticed, just like that. But, as previously mentioned, even though he took the lead in the search, principal Kim Do-seop had been a prime suspect since the beginning, and he was the one who later turned out to be the actual murderer. In the end, he wasn't able to outwit the police investigation or my wife's obstinate pursuit and mother's intuition. Furthermore, along with that man's confession, the police were able to procure a sufficient amount of evidence to convict him.

My wife's resentment, however, could not be resolved with the capture of the criminal alone. She did not find that satisfying. What she wanted to do was dig out his eyes and pull out his liver to feast on it raw. Just like one of the things our child was put through, she wanted to tie his wrists behind him, lock him in a basement, strangle him then bury his body.

Not surprisingly, the authorities never gave my wife the opportunity to carry out these tasks. Since the moment he confessed his crime, this man received full security while in custody and was able to dodge my wife's vindictive rage. The devastating loss of our son was deliberated on by those who had no personal connection to the matter whatsoever, who asked questions about the murderer's motive and actions, and after the court's final ruling, which was death, he was sent to a sturdy brick shelter. And so it was that the target of my wife's burgeoning wrath was out of her reach. Despite her teeming vengefulness, the most my wife was allowed by the police was to repeatedly call the man "an evil murderer" until she lost consciousness. There was no way that my wife's contempt was going to be erased.

But, if I think about it, in another sense it's possible that that might have been a relief after all. It's because of that fire for vengeance burning inside her chest that she was able to sustain herself. The greatest misfortune for my wife was that inside that sorrowful heart of hers where vengeance had dissipated, a new bud had begun to sprout. But of course, at the time, I hadn't the slightest idea. And I'm certain that that was the case for my wife as well.

My wife continued to spend day after day ruminating on her resentful thoughts. Although the criminal was kept far away, the direction in which she aimed her contempt did not change. Could it have been that Kim Do-seop recognized the gravity of his own crime? After the offender accepted the punishment dictated

by the first trial's verdict and waived his right to an appeal, the only thing left for him to do was wait for the authorities to set the date of his execution. The problem was that the authorities didn't seem to be in any hurry.

Whatever the reason for that might have been, the vengeance inside my wife was still seeking satisfaction. She anticipated the day of the offender's hanging and yearned for his soul to drop straight down to hell afterward. On the other hand, she wanted to tear up the offender's body and hurl it down to hell herself. At such times, she even worried about possibly missing the day of the hanging.

She hated the neighbors who stared, and the metal fencing around our residence made her look like a caged animal at a zoo. My wife turned into the sight of a woman who couldn't find peace of mind due to her appetite for revenge. In spite of it all, she was able to tough it out. Furthermore, as if the authorities intended to do what was best for my wife, they didn't seem to be in the slightest hurry to set a date for the hanging.

And so it went till the season changed. It was sometime in early October. I suppose Mrs. Kim took pity on my wife's condition, and she began to pay her visits again. She begged my wife to give her body and soul some rest. "My dear, give yourself peace of mind. And try to reduce your disdain and contempt for that man. As far as I can tell, this isn't very healthy. It's not like you're in a position where you can actually do anything to that man. Even if you forgive him, he'll

still be forced to pay for the crime he's committed. If you continue to remain vexed and resentful, you'll only ruin your own mood, don't you think? You're turning sour."

Mrs. Kim's point was that the offender's judgment by the people had come to a close. The only thing that remained was God's judgment. She said that in this world, instead of cursing and resenting that man, the thing to do was to leave it all up to God. Furthermore, if possible, she suggested that my wife forgive and have compassion for this man.

"But it wouldn't necessarily be for his benefit—rather, it would be for your own good. And it would be for A-ram's poor, precious soul, too. For your own sake and for the sake of A-ram's soul, don't continue to burden yourself with this deep resentment. Try to find peace of mind. If you make the effort to do that, then the Lord will surely help you."

Mrs. Kim said that no matter what, regardless of what the case might be, human beings have no right to judge one another. The one who passes the final judgment on humankind is God alone, and people only have the power to forgive—nothing more. With that in mind, if one person resents another and tries to judge that person, then the resentment and judgment would turn against the one who'd attempted them in the first place. Again, in the beginning, my wife paid no heed to what Mrs. Kim was telling her. Upon hearing that a human being had no given right to pass judgment on another human being and that, if possible, she should try to forgive the criminal, my wife stood up shouting,

even attempting to hurl herself at Mrs. Kim.

But Mrs. Kim did not budge. Her conviction that my wife, now more than ever, was in need of the Lord's guidance made her more sincere and persistent in the matter than ever. My wife appeared to be in need of Mrs. Kim's help. She was so filled with contempt and vengeance that she was not her normal self. Ever since A-ram's body was discovered, my wife was able to fight through it all in her miserable state because of that noxious contempt and desire for revenge. In that sense, they were necessary evils, and indeed her instincts helped her survive. My wife couldn't possibly continue to rely on them forever, though. That couldn't possibly constitute life for a normal human being. My wife had to return to being her old self. She had to forget what happened to our child and free herself from her self-destructive grudge and thoughts of revenge. With that, she had to learn to deal with her everyday affairs in a normal way. Mrs. Kim wasn't entirely wrong. The lecture she gave on the rights of man was something my wife needed to hear. In my opinion, my wife really seemed to be in need of Mrs. Kim's guidance according to the Lord's purpose. I certainly encouraged my wife to devote herself to this. And at Mrs. Kim's recommendation that both my wife and I go to church together, I subtly assisted Mrs. Kim by telling her that above all it would be best if we focused on leading my wife in the right direction.

I wonder what it was that changed her mind? As Mrs. Kim's persuasion and my encouragement continued, she gradually began to soften, and one day, to

everyone's surprise, she followed Mrs. Kim to church. But the decision didn't come from a wellspring of good intentions. It wasn't because she wanted to reclaim her peace of mind or find the strength and courage to be able to get through it all. Above all else, it was not because she wanted to give up her deep-seated hatred for the criminal and forgive him. There is no way that a person's mind could change so drastically overnight.

As it turned out, my wife began attending church because she was interested in saving the child's soul. Her prayers were all for the child's salvation in the afterlife. Whether she was at home or at church (of this I am certain) she only muttered words regarding the child's eternal life and happiness. In this way, she relied on the offerings she made to the church, which she gave in return for the salvation of our son's soul. But I had no reason to scold my wife for her behavior. Whatever her motive might have been, what mattered was that she was up and about again. That was the most important thing. If she continued her church attendance in that manner, I was sure that a genuine faith would eventually take root in her heart. Through that, she would cleanse herself of the past wounds and return to her previous self.

Mrs. Kim was inwardly hoping for the same thing. So she persisted, pretending not to notice my wife's sudden fanaticism. She applied sincere and persistent efforts to leading this woman toward true piety.

Our efforts were not for naught. It seemed that my wife was gradually beginning to realize the Lord's great love. From that love, she seemed to have become

convinced of the child's salvation. My sense was that her contempt was slowly diminishing. She was softening her heart day-by-day and allowing herself to recuperate from her recent past. At long last, she was finally giving herself up to God's love and shedding tears of gratitude.

"Lord, thank you. Thank you for your love and grace." My wife, as if she'd noticed this change in herself as well, made it a habit to mutter these words of gratitude under her breath. After working her back off to prepare a meal for the table, before partaking, this new child of God first offered up a word of prayer: "Father God, thank you for preparing this precious and delicious lunch." I wondered if the Father who heard this prayer shared the sentiments of his child. My wife's frequent prayer was enough to give rise to feelings of slight betrayal in me, given how everything I'd done up till then were in support of my wife and child.

In any case, our happiness was indescribable. My wife's faith allowed her to regain strength. Not only that, it even gave me the opportunity to wash away the pain that was lodged deep inside of me, allowing me to escape from the nightmare. I could at the very least gain a small ounce of hope from the change my wife went through.

But in terms of expectations for change, Mrs. Kim, the woman who acted as the guide to my wife's faith, had the most. Mrs. Kim, as if she'd received some sort of encouragement from my wife's new sense of piety, egged her on to take one step further: she convinced

my wife that by now she should be able to forgive the criminal; although human beings had never been given the right to judge one another in the first place, if a person didn't empty her heart out completely, especially her feelings of hatred and contempt, then room for the Lord's love and grace remained that much smaller. And so, she should take this opportunity to forgive him and eliminate the contempt, anger, and hatred completely and greet the Lord in a praiseworthy fashion. She told my wife that it was time to show her benevolence.

"One would have to be born yesterday not to know that God's deep providence is immeasurable by human standards. Who would have guessed that the opportunity for you to greet the Lord's good grace could come from the sad and tragic death of A-ram? The Lord who has prepared all this honor and grace was training us in order to greet the test of love. And how could we not believe in the salvation of A-ram's soul before this historical moment of love and the Lord's profound providence? Forgive the criminal completely. That is, without a doubt, what the Lord wants, and it will make him happy."

Mrs. Kim asserted that A-ram was saved and earnestly asked my wife to forgive the sinner. She did not say it just once or twice but brought it up persistently. As a result, I suppose my wife began to develop similar thoughts on her own. I suppose it was all the more a sign of a start to genuine faith sprouting inside of her, which would blossom into development and growth.

As time passed, my wife's profile and speaking tone

softened. Day-to-day activities were back on track (right around the time the criminal's trial came to an end, I returned to work at the pharmacy, but every now and then, since a time I can't quite remember, my wife began to appear at odd hours and just sit there), and more than anything, my mind seemed to regain stability, bit by bit. I no longer found myself cursing or mouthing resentments at the murderer. Then out of the blue, my wife approached me with the look of someone who had just woken from a deep sleep and asked, "That man . . . that poor man's execution hasn't been carried out yet, has it?" This was something that my wife already knew, but her tone carried a new sense of relief.

Ultimately, just as Mrs. Kim had hoped, my wife was able to forgive that man. She wanted to forgive him in person, and her desire to do so was strong. It was just as that hellish year was coming to a close, right around mid-December—seven months after the A-ram tragedy. It was also right after Kim Do-seop's date of execution was confirmed and two months after my wife turned to church with Mrs. Kim's guidance.

It appears that for every person, there's a road that one can't help but to go down as a human being. It also appears that there are certain things that a person can and cannot do. To forgive Kim Do-seop was to benefit my wife—more so than anyone else. But it would have been perfectly adequate for her to forgive him quietly on her own. Anything more than that was unnecessary, and there was no cause for her to want anything beyond that. If she had kept it at that,

then she would've been able to continue her journey toward salvation. But she began making a fuss over an unnecessary matter. This is what brought on her final tragedy. What she dared to want was evidence of her forgiveness. Furthermore, she wanted to confront the criminal who had been the target of all her contempt and vengeance, and bring him to salvation.

"I'm going to have to pay a visit to the prison and meet him in person." Some ten days had passed since she made up her mind to forgive him. My wife, who had been coming to the pharmacy to sit with me lately, said these words completely out of the blue. It was proof of her mind's determination to forgive. Furthermore, judging by her tone, it seemed as though she'd given this matter a great deal of thought. She wanted this in order to put her mind to rest and allow herself a clean start once and for all. She needed to visit the person herself and affirm her forgiveness of him before she could enjoy a pure and comfortable state of mind. In other words, she wanted some sort of evidence of the fact that she'd forgiven that man.

I'm uncertain as to whether that was necessary to benefit my wife, to benefit the convict Kim Do-seop on death row, or simply to benefit everyone. But I wasn't ready to give in without some resistance. The reason being that I felt as though she was going too far. My resistance was in sync with how far my wife pushed the matter: "Well, I wonder if you really need to go that far. It's enough to simply forgive a man in your mind. I mean, it's not like you're some kind of saint . . ." I subtly tried to dissuade her. But my

wife had no intention of changing her mind. It was as though she had to properly serve the Lord owing to some sort of debt. As the days passed, her mind seemed more and more made up in that direction. It's possible that she herself was still in need of some self-affirmation.

As it turned out, my consent in this matter was a non-issue. The reason for her telling me this wasn't because the matter was up for discussion with me. The person with whom she'd actually conferred on this matter was Mrs. Kim. It seemed that Mrs. Kim and my wife had been deliberating on this for some time, ever since my wife began dropping hints of her intention.

One day, Mrs. Kim paid the pharmacy a visit unbeknown to my wife. I inferred from this woman's visit—she who never had any reason to come see me before—that she was not entirely confident with regard to this matter. Just as anyone would have guessed, Mrs. Kim claimed that my wife had not achieved a level of complete stability. "I think it would be best if you and your wife discussed this together. Your wife is still in a vulnerable state right now, and it's possible that such a high pressure conversation could be traumatic." Nevertheless, the deeply religious Mrs. Kim still retained the confidence of a pious believer. She sought my concurrence by claiming that even so, the matter in question could be an important necessity for my wife.

"It's true that your wife may be in need of an opportunity to gain some sort of reassurance, but just in case any problems arise from this visit, I'll be sure

to go with her. So long as I go and remain beside her, I'm sure there won't be any problem. As long as we avoid revisiting any trauma, other than the issue of her forgiveness, there is nothing for her to lose. If you allow it, I'll try to arrange a visit. If my help alone isn't enough, we can always count on our minister to lend a hand." I couldn't simply reject the idea based on my intuition. Not only was Mrs. Kim's help responsible for bringing my wife to this point, but if my wife claimed that this matter was imperative, I had no choice but to put all my trust in Mrs. Kim and allow them to proceed: "I'll trust you no matter what, Mrs. Kim."

Despite my persistent misgivings, which had kept me in a constant state of anxiety, I made up my mind then and there. The reason being that no matter what, Mrs. Kim's instincts regarding my wife's situation up until that point had been accurate, and my wife appeared to have a staunch trust in this woman. But now that I look back on it, that was a rash and thoughtless decision on my part. I had been completely ignorant of the human volition and my wife's potential for handling the matter so irresponsibly. Mrs. Kim seemed to exhibit a sheer lack of confidence in the beginning, but her arrangement had resulted in a completely unnecessary complication. The sliver of uncertainty that I initially harbored had turned into a wretched reality.

The arrangements made for my wife's visit were a lot easier than expected. After approaching various agencies in charge of such matters with the reverend at her side, the plans seemed to have gone smoothly. And so, with the preparations made by Mrs. Kim, she and

my wife made a visit to Kim Do-seop on death row. Coincidentally, the visit landed on a fairly significant date, right around Christmas—on December twenty-third.

But this was my wife's final step down the path to complete collapse. After she visited Kim Do-seop, we were back at square one. After she returned from the visit, she lapsed back into her previous state, lying in bed like a patient consumed by fever. She remained subdued and inactive while suffering an anguish all on her own.

There was just no way to know the reason for it. I couldn't bring Mrs. Kim to fill me in on what the cause was, either. I finally went to Mrs. Kim's shop and demanded a start-to-finish description of that day, bombarding her with all sorts of questions. Mrs. Kim, however, was just as unsure about what had happened to my wife that day.

"When we met him, nothing happened. The visit ended without any problems." When I asked Mrs. Kim if the culprit was just as atrocious and unwilling to beg for my wife's mercy as he had been, she replied that it was on the contrary.

"Far from it. He fully acknowledged his faults and sincerely sought forgiveness from your wife. Actually, he took it upon himself to ask her for whatever punishment she had in mind. He said that if he could make her feel any better about what he'd done, then he would gladly face the punishment. The reason we know he meant it is because he, too, was already a converted Christian and following the ways of the Lord."

He told my wife that the Lord had forgiven him for all his sins and that by the love of Christ he had been granted peace of mind. Not only that, while shedding tears of repentance, he said he had volunteered to donate his eyes upon his death as an act of giving back to society in return for the love he received from Christ. He said that in order to experience an even greater sense of peace and tranquility, he was looking forward to his last day on earth because that was the day he would go to stand before the Lord. He was genuinely happy about the coming of that day, and he was awaiting it with a glad and open heart. Having received the Lord's forgiveness, he was following the path of righteousness with a soul cleansed of its sins."

Mrs. Kim continued that with this man's soul already forgiven by God, he and my wife had become like brother and sister in Christ. And so, as a fellow child of the same Father, he claimed to be prepared to accept whatever vengeful acts or damnations she had in store for him.

Moreover, Mrs. Kim said that he was craving my wife's forgiveness. She said he seemed incredibly in need of it. However, she continued, upon meeting this man, my wife was unable to forgive him. "I can't understand your wife. In fact, I couldn't hide my disappointment in her, because I knew she hadn't forgiven him yet. She lacked faith all along." Mrs. Kim came to the tidy conclusion that my wife was unable to forgive him because she lacked faith. And she chastised this woman who was unable to forgive a man who'd already received forgiveness from God. Mrs. Kim said

that she was unable to understand a woman who had accepted Christ into her heart and pursued an active path toward forgiveness on her own, then revealed that she still harbored contempt for this man.

Even after listening to Mrs. Kim, however, I was unable to plumb the depths to investigate my wife's renewed sense of despair. Since the person who'd gone with my wife to witness the scene in person was also at a loss, I had no way of being any more understanding or supportive of my wife. Had she not gone there on her own accord because she wanted to meet and forgive him? And was it not true that he had fully repented for his crimes and was waiting for her forgiveness? Considering the circumstances, how is it that my wife returned with such grief? Amid all the dizzying questions, however, the answer was right in front of us. What I mean is that beneath the jumble of criticisms from Mrs. Kim, the answer was plainly there because it brought out the same feelings in me. As Mrs. Kim gave her account, I remember empathizing with her completely yet, at the same time, sensing a slight, and confused sense of betrayal. The answer to this riddle was hiding inside that hint of betrayal. But in my disillusioned state, I was unable to recognize it as such.

I was able to come to this recognition a few days later. And, for the first time ever, I could see the seed of my wife's despair. It was on this day that I was finally able to identify this sense of betrayal, which I no longer had any doubts about.

In a way, I am grateful to Mrs. Kim. She truly was

the sort of Christian who would have that much love for her neighbor. Her sense of duty was just as tough as her love and faith in Christ. Mrs. Kim did not give up on my wife. No matter what, Mrs. Kim was determined to get my wife back on her feet and restore her Christian faith. And in order to manage the crisis that her Christian love had suffered, she started by trying to bring my wife's mind back to forgiveness. Mrs. Kim came to see my wife every day. She tried to summon back my wife's courage and morale with all her might.

My wife, as usual, was silent, and the words of encouragement and support from Mrs. Kim stopped dead at the end of a one-way street. Then, one day, after endless persuasions by Mrs. Kim, my wife finally opened her mouth, unlocking the answers to her own private despair. "Mrs. Kim, you don't know. In fact, a person whose faith runs so deeply would be even more in the dark. I cannot develop a faith as rooted as yours. Therefore I am more capable of understanding people and feeling the suffering they cause."

Not to be hindered by persuasions, my wife turned away all of Mrs. Kim's explanations and remained steadfast in her position. Instead of taking Mrs. Kim's word for it, my wife criticized her. During her spell of silence, a new kind of revelation seemed to have hardened inside of her, and she began to wail and lament despairingly.

"I thought that I was supposed to forgive that man just like you said. That's why I went all the way to prison to visit him, you see? But when I finally saw

him for myself, I just couldn't. And it's not just because of my weak faith. It's just that he seemed so impudent. How can a person be like that? That man is a murderer. He killed my son. How could he sit before the dead child's mother and remain so poised, looking her straight in the eye with such a peaceful expression? How can a murderer transform himself to be saint-like? That sort of thing never happens. It's impossible, which is why it is impossible for me to forgive him.

"My dear, listen. That man did not look at you that way out of impudence. You heard him say it yourself, didn't you? He has already offered his soul up to God. Through that, he was able to receive forgiveness. So he's found peace of mind, and that is why he appeared so at ease."

Mrs. Kim tried her best to get my wife's wayward thinking back on track. But my wife did not give in. Naturally, both of them began to raise their voices and the discussion escalated into a bitter argument.

"You're right. My inability to forgive him goes beyond my just not wanting to. Rather, even if I wanted to, I am no longer able to. Just like you said, Mrs. Kim, that man already received forgiveness. I can't just re-forgive someone, nor is there any need for it. But who forgives before I do? I haven't even forgiven that man, but I'm asking who the hell else grants that forgiveness? Who but me is able to forgive him? That right can't possibly reside in anyone else's hands, not even God's. But God took that final opportunity away from me. How on earth can I re-forgive a forgiven man?"

My wife began to lay out her reasoning with more thought and depth this time, letting out her true feelings and her anger. But Mrs. Kim was so distracted by her own objective to prove my wife wrong that she couldn't see from my wife's point of view. In the standoff between humankind and God, Mrs. Kim sided solely with God in all his glory—even to the point of reproach.

“Our God the Father can do that. *That is your Divine Providence, Lord. We are unable to know the whole of your Promise. Our duty is to blindly accept and follow You.* Forgiveness is the same. If God has forgiven him, we must forgive. Because that is our duty as servants of the Almighty. As you are well aware from that day, that man did say that he was prepared to willingly accept your wrath and punishment. Through the Lord's forgiveness, his tranquility, even in the face of death, is evidence of his soul's salvation and grace. And so he was able to withstand your contempt and hatred for him so willingly, and forgive you.”

“Forgive me for what? And on top of that the Lord has forgiven—in that case, I suppose that could be true, who knows. I probably hate him even more and find it even harder to forgive out of jealousy. But could that really be what God wants? God takes away my only chance to forgive somebody by forgiving him first, and makes me forgive Kim Do-seop despite his initial act of forgiveness? Could that really be God's impartial love? I can't believe in such a thing. If I have to believe that, I'd rather choose God's wrath. I'm saying, no matter what sort of punishment God may inflict on

me, I choose to lead the life of a human being who hates, curses, and seeks revenge.”

My wife was unleashing her final words of despair. But Mrs. Kim was no longer trying to see the small, suffocated remnant of life left inside this poor woman. Instead, confronted by my wife's disgraceful breakdown, Mrs. Kim defended her God's solemn precepts to the very end. At this point, she began to coerce my wife like a representative of God.

“As I've already said many times, that's because of God's hidden purpose—his divine promise. The Lord God probably wanted to rescue both yours and A-ram's souls through that man. It's not because your forgiveness will benefit a man who's already found forgiveness from the Lord—no. It's because this is probably what your soul and A-ram's soul both need. Above all else, you must know this. For you, this is the only path that remains. As servants of God, the fetters that have been placed on us can't possibly be removed or thrown aside through our own desires. Because, if nothing else, that only opens up doors to let in more calamity.”

“Ahhh!—but what about me? What about me?” At the end of such a sorrowful sentence my wife was, once again, at a loss for words. And with that, the day's impossible argument (albeit one that could have meant either her salvation or death) came to an end. But on that day, I was finally able to see the hellish hopelessness that my wife had been living with up until then. For the first time, I was able to peer in and see the root of her despair. In short, the

object of her forgiveness had been snatched away by God. She'd lost her opportunity even to be *able* to forgive. Furthermore, she not only lost the object of her contempt, but the target of her vengeance had vanished completely. That's not all. The man that she had gone to see with a mind firmly made up to grant him forgiveness was sitting before her, telling her that by God's forgiveness and salvation, he was able to lead a life of grace.

There was no way that the souls of my poor wife and child could ever be delivered into the arms of God through that man's "instrumental" participation in such a system (how anyone could call that forgiveness, I will never know). My wife's sense of betrayal was most certainly called for. The unhappiness she felt was completely natural and human.

My wife's breakdown in her fragile state wasn't over yet. The deeper frustration lay in her realization that she could no longer go back to carrying out her human decision—revenge. That was not necessarily due to Mrs. Kim's threats or coercion. At the time, my wife had been prepared to carry out her duty as a believer and grant that man her forgiveness. She was fully aware of her motive and the merit behind her actions. To abandon that motive was no different from abandoning herself. She could not bring herself to throw it all away. At the same time, she could not abandon the "human" that existed within her by bringing herself to trust solely in the Lord's "salvation." The Lord's purpose was too distant and pointless for her to do such a thing.

My wife's heart was ruthlessly torn between God's divine providence and the "human" self that existed within her. But she didn't bother to give Mrs. Kim that explanation. She probably didn't see the need for it. That explanation on human kind's insignificance and shabby imperfection—until Mrs. Kim could ache and grieve over such limitations and weaknesses, this mindset my wife had would forever be beyond her. The reason my wife had kept her mouth shut even to me up until then had everything to do with that. The awful pain and despair within kept her from being able to open her mouth to speak.

But I was finally able to understand my wife's sadness. Even if I hadn't been a father who'd just lost a child, I felt that I could finally join her in her pain and live with our right to exist as insignificant and lowly humans. But even so, how would such a thing be of any help to my dear wife? Furthermore, what could I have done to lift that weight of unhappiness from her and save her from despair? Despite knowing all this about her, I continued to look after her in what little ways I could. Circling around her constantly, passively, all I did was look at my wife with pity while I suffered quietly alone. Could it be because I had taken into account Mrs. Kim's remark that this was just another hurdle for my wife to overcome—the kind that she must overcome in order to win back life and salvation? And could this be regarded as simply my wife's share of suffering that she needed to overcome on her own? No. Certainly not. But of course, Mrs. Kim still thought this way. And she continued to visit

my wife to preach about the "Father's" promise and perfect love. She continued attempting to restore my wife's faith, trying to incite her with encouragements as a servant of God.

I, on the other hand, was not able to do this, for I had no outside support. I couldn't even begin to think that my wife would be able to carry out such a thing. That's because other than feeling sorry for her and saying useless things that would only disturb her unsound state, I had no other course of action or a plan. My wife appeared to have committed her last remaining self to a dark ultimatum. No matter what Mrs. Kim or I said to her, nothing seemed to reach her consciousness. Following that day, she completely shut the world out, closing her mouth for good. She didn't take a single sip of water.

Ah, but how could I have even measured the depths that her sorrow had reached? My dear wife continued on in that way before finally taking her own life. In order to give up on both the nature of humankind and the providence of God, she simply cut away the root of her despair. It's possible that the news of Kim Do-seop's execution being carried out had somehow reached her, which prompted her final action.

As the daylight changed and February rolled through, Kim Do-seop's execution by hanging finally took place, and the event was broadcast on the radio. Kim Do-seop's last words to the world stirred such an unfamiliar sense of hatred in me that my whole body shook uncontrollably with rage:

"Why should I fear death now that I'm here? My

soul has already been saved by God's love and promise. Not only my spirit but a part of my body will also be reborn here on this earth, gaining new life, because I am leaving behind my eyes and heart to my brothers and sisters remaining on earth."

His last and final wishes were stated at the execution site: "Should I have any last wishes, it would be that the people who are suffering because of me would find love and salvation through God. Through their sacrifice and pain, I am able, today, to gain new life, a new soul, but that child's family is probably still suffering from a horrible sadness and torment. I pray both here on this earth and there in the next life for those people. Lord, I ask you to deliver my soul and the child's soul into the next world, and with your love, please take away his family's pain and be their crutch . . ."

Her nerves had been frayed the whole time, and it was no different on that day. That could have been it. My wife, who did nothing but stare at the ceiling all day—oblivious to whether the sun was up or down—on that particular day, she just so happened to be listening to that damned radio. She'd heard everything.

That was on February fifth, right around the time the sun began to set. And just two days later, unable to withstand it any longer, she took some pills, taking her own life. Neither to Mrs. Kim—the woman who'd looked after her all that time—nor to me, did my wife leave behind a single word of her last will and testament.