

A note from the author —

While I didn't plan out the plot before starting to write, I knew the atmosphere I wanted to create. I wanted to write a novel evoking the mood of *Kamome Diner* and *Little Forest*. A space we can escape to, a refuge from the intensity of daily life where we can't even pause to take a breather. A space to shelter us from the harsh criticisms whipping us to do more, to go faster. A space to snuggle comfortably for a day. A day without something siphoning our energy, a day to replenish what's lost. A day we begin with anticipation and end with satisfaction. A day where we grow, and from growth sprouts hope. A day spent having meaningful conversations with good people. Most importantly, a day where we feel good, and our hearts beat strongly. I wanted to write about such a day, and the people within it.

In other words, I wanted to write what I want to read. Stories of people who find their own pace and direction, of people who believe in others and wait by their side as they go through difficult times, lost in worry. Stories of those who support others, who celebrate small efforts and resolve in a society that puts people – and everything about them – down once they take a fall. Stories that bring comfort, providing a pat on the shoulder for those who've lost the joy in life, having pushed themselves too hard to do well.

You might not notice right away, but everyone in the novel is taking small steps forward, whether it's learning something new, or making a change to their lives. What they're doing might be far from achieving what society deems as success, but they're growing and changing through their consistent efforts – taking several steps away from where they started off. How others judge where they stand – be it high or low, good or bad – doesn't matter to them. The fact that they've progressed, and are happy where they are, is sufficient. The yardstick to measure one's life lies within oneself. And that's good enough.

Even if it's not every day, or often, there are moments in life where we come to think, *That's good enough*. In that moment, all the anxiety and worries melt away, leaving us with the realisation that we've done our best to get to where we are. We're satisfied, and proud of ourselves. If Hyunam-dong Bookshop is an accumulation of such moments in life, I hope that many more people can create a similar space for themselves.

To you, who are spending the day there, I'm here rooting for you.

Hwang Bo-reum
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