

Between Heaven and Earth: Book Three - Destiny and Fate - Chapter Eight - The Family Guy

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There was no doubt in Guy's mind that Kyle was a family guy. When deep in his cups Kyle often announced it. Guy was sure that it might be true in a manner of speaking but he mostly regarded it as a kind of virtue signaling. Kyle had arrived in Korea at a low point in his life and, characteristically, fell in love with the land and people. In short order he also met a woman and fell in love with her. Within a year he and Lee Kyung Hee had gotten married and were endeavoring to live happily ever after. Kyle had found the stability and family that he hadn't known growing up. He quickly learned that he had not only married a wife but had married her family as well. He loved being a family guy.

Kyle and his bride were different as night and day. She was from a strict religious family, was upwardly mobile, and almost always got her way. On the other hand her hubby came from a pretty chaotic family that he tended to reproduce in his own life. They often fought and just as often loved. Of course the result was a handful of kids. All and all it was a big step up for Kyle and he did his best,

in spite of numerous threats of divorce if he didn't shape up, to keep it together. So far so good.

At the last moment Guy had invited Jeong Sook to join the meet up with Kyle. It was about time and he figured she would be an asset to the evening's program. As they sat at a table in Geckos waiting for the family guy to show up, Jeong Sook continued to quiz Guy for more stories about the patron saint whose feast day everyone was enthusiastically celebrating.

"So why everybody want to get drunk on this saint's day?" She was perplexed. She loved Patrick talking with God, his calling, and his driving out the snakes but couldn't make the connection to imbibing copious amounts of alcohol.

"It is all a part of his legend that Patrick was a holy man who converted the whole nation in the span of his lifetime. In order to do that he had to do battle with the Druid priests for the hearts and minds of the people," while explaining such things Guy was in his element.

Jeong Sook was an adept student and soaked up all that she could. "Druid, what that?"

"The Druids were powerful priests and magicians. They controlled the inner lives of both the kings and the people."

"Were they bad guys? Sounds like the moodangs in Korea."

"You got that right. They were like the shamans. They had a well developed oral tradition and exercised a great deal of power as well as influence over the land."

"But were they bad guys?"

"I don't think so but they were an obstacle to the new faith that required belief in and obedience to one God."

"How did Patrick beat the Druids?" Jeong Sook was fascinated and made comparisons in her mind to what she knew about her own country.

"Not sure, maybe the people were just ready for a god of love and forgiveness rather than the ones of nature, power, and magic."

"Why the heavy drinking?" For some reason this was important to her.

"The Irish like to drink. They like to fight, tell stories, sing, and of course drink."

"Sounds like Korean people," she observed.

"Yes, you're not the first to mention that. I've heard folks say that the Koreans are the Irish of Asia. The Irish are Celts, a people that migrated across Europe and settled in the British Isles. In pre Christian times. They were fierce fighters that loved nothing better than drinking until they were roaring drunk and entertaining themselves with stories of their heroic exploits. The Irish have stories that go back to pre-writing times about battles, cattle raids, and love making that would make a whore blush. A few of the most bodacious heros were women. The church tried its best to squash such unholy traditions throughout Europe. The Roman church and the Celtic church developed differently. The holy fathers in Ireland seemed to wink at the old traditions. In the early days, many of the Irish saints and leaders, even priests, were women."

"Women, really?" She was surprised. "Not possible in Korea. Womens better act like women here."

Next, Jeong Sook wanted to know why the people of such a small backward country and it's holy man are celebrated in America, around the world, and even in Korea. Over gin and tonics that the staff had somehow managed to turn a shade of green and a plate of cheese sticks, Guy explained the potato famine and the great Irish diaspora of the 19th century.

"The Irish have the gift of gab. When they arrived in America along with waves of immigrants from other countries they already spoke a dialect of English. This was a leg up for them and they first became laborers, soldiers, and shopkeepers. Often they got into politics which led to them getting jobs as firemen and policemen. Even today the ranks and culture of big city police departments are heavily Irish." Guy thought of his own great grandparents who had played their part in this story as he related it to the lady.

As he continued to lecture Jeong Sook on the cultural, political, and literary impact of the Irish in America and the world, she got tipsy and lost her ability to make sense out of the English. Just then Kyle made his entrance.

If he was surprised to see that Guy had brought along a guest, he didn't show it. Instead he sprawled in a seat across from Jeong Sook and enquired,

"What up dog? How long you been here?"

"For about an hour. You know 8:30; when we agreed. Where you been?" Guy wasn't really pissed but had to call the dude out.

"Had to finish the makoli before I left and the old lady had to lecture me about you." No apology given. "Who is this? She speak any English?"

"Yup, better than you when you are drunk. This is Kim Jeong Sook. Say hello like a gentleman"

"I got it, your Yoko Ono," the family guy slurred.

Jeong Sook smiled and listened intently to try and catch the nuances of the rapid fire conversation. There was no way she would get the cultural significance of the Yoko Ono comment.

Kyle not only considered himself a family guy but also prided himself in being the nice guy and so it was no surprise that he and Jeong Sook hit it off. Clearly Kyle was already half in the bag but half is just a number. They ordered another round of cocktails and an additional two beers for the family guy.

"Hey, it's St. Paddy's Day. Why you guys not wearing green?"

Guy explained and Kyle commented, "be careful, somebody might jump you and paint your ass green," referring to the old custom practiced by working class thugs when celebrating the holiday.

"Oh Guy, you didn't tell about everybody wearing green. Why that," Jeong Sook asked.

It was a perfectly logical question on such a day. The bar was packed with drinkers wearing green hats, scarfs, shirts, socks, and all manner of green.

"One of the most confusing and controversial doctrines at that time was the Trinity, one God in three persons. Patrick used the green shamrock, a three leaf clover, to teach his converts about it. Thus green became associated with Patrick and Ireland."

"Oh, I see," she didn't quite get it but was fascinated and decided to find out more about a trinity later.

Geckos was noisy and crowded so they made up their minds to change spots. Kyle wanted to go across the street to Three Amigos, an expat bar he could see out the windows. Guy settled the tab and they made their bird.

Jeong Sook and Kyle walked up the stairs to the third floor joint arm and arm while Guy trudged up behind them. Of course the bar was also crowded but less so than Geckos. They found a table and Jeong

Sook ordered shots of tequila. Guy made a mental note to try and put the brakes on, at least until they had accomplished their mission.

A little bird whispered in his ear, "good luck with that."

Jeong Sook was paying attention and by the third tequila, she was deep in conversation with Kyle. At first he wanted to know about North Korea and her life. She began to tell her story, careful not to reveal too much personal information. She explained her dilemma several times and couched it in terms of family and how much she needed to reunite her family. The family guy totally got it and was won over by the story.

"So we gotta get started on my black op rescue plan," Kyle was sure.

Guy resisted the urge to reach over and slap him. Better to let the lady handle it. And she did. She first convinced Kyle that his idea wasn't gonna work. Then she talked with him for a long time about the reality of the markets and the utility of the bribe to get things done.

"The trouble is, we got no money." Strategically or not, Jeong Sook was now crying.

"Kyle was visibly moved and announced, "I got an idea. I got money. How much do you need?"

All of it, Guy thought but bit his tongue. "Oh Kyle, would you do that? Will you help me?" She didn't mention an exact amount.

"Absolutely! This is important and will be money well spent. I'm always all-in."

"You promise?" Jeong Sook sealed the deal and just in time.

"Sure, and you can take that to the bank," Kyle promised grinning at his own play on words.

Out of the tequila haze appeared a face. Oh shit, thought Guy. She was a blast from his past. It was Na Young.

"Long time Guy. How you been?" She was a thirty something, no that was ten years ago, slender lass with a cherubic Korean face.

Guy and Na Young had spent a few nights drinking together. The only memorable one was when he had performed minor surgery on her forehead. She had been complaining bitterly about the dermatologist who had wanted to charge her 400,000 won, a small fortune for a bar girl, to remove a mole in the center of her forehead. Guy, only wanting to help, took a look. Not a problem. He took out his pocket knife and cut the offending growth off in one slice. Na Young was feeling no pain and the stream of blood that ran down between her eyes didn't upset her a bit. She mopped it up with a Kleenex, took out a compact, and examined the incision in the mirror. She pronounced it well done and thanked Guy profusely. Three weeks later he ran into her again and inspected his handiwork. Almost perfect, the scar was so small that it could be hidden with a little make up. Guy had considered adding 'surgeon' to his resume.

It was a great story but the timing was all wrong for the serious business of the night. Kyle also knew Na Young and insisted that she join them. He told the surgery story and everyone examined Na Young's face for any sign of the operation. Good thing Jeong Sook was pretty smashed. If she understood the story there might have been hell to pay.

The night's business finished, they staggered up the hill to the Country Club for more Mexican fire water and dancing. They finished the night with Jeong Sook crying, Kyle passed out, and Na Young de-camping with a couple of GIs.

Guy was tasked with getting everyone home. Both Jeong Sook and Kyle fell at least once going down the hill. At the bottom, Guy poured Kyle into the back seat of a taxi, gave the driver double the estimated fare, and an address. At the last moment Jeong Sook leaned into the cab, grabbed Kyle by his coat and said,

"You promised, don't forget." She was serious about keeping promises as Guy well knew.

"The Luck of the Irish!" mumbled Guy.